No. 895
Friday
5 April '96

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MAD COW LATEST

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Resign matey

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THE WEEK
Our soundbite culture 4
The truth about mad cow disease 9
The rich are back 12
Hollywood's hatred of the English 13
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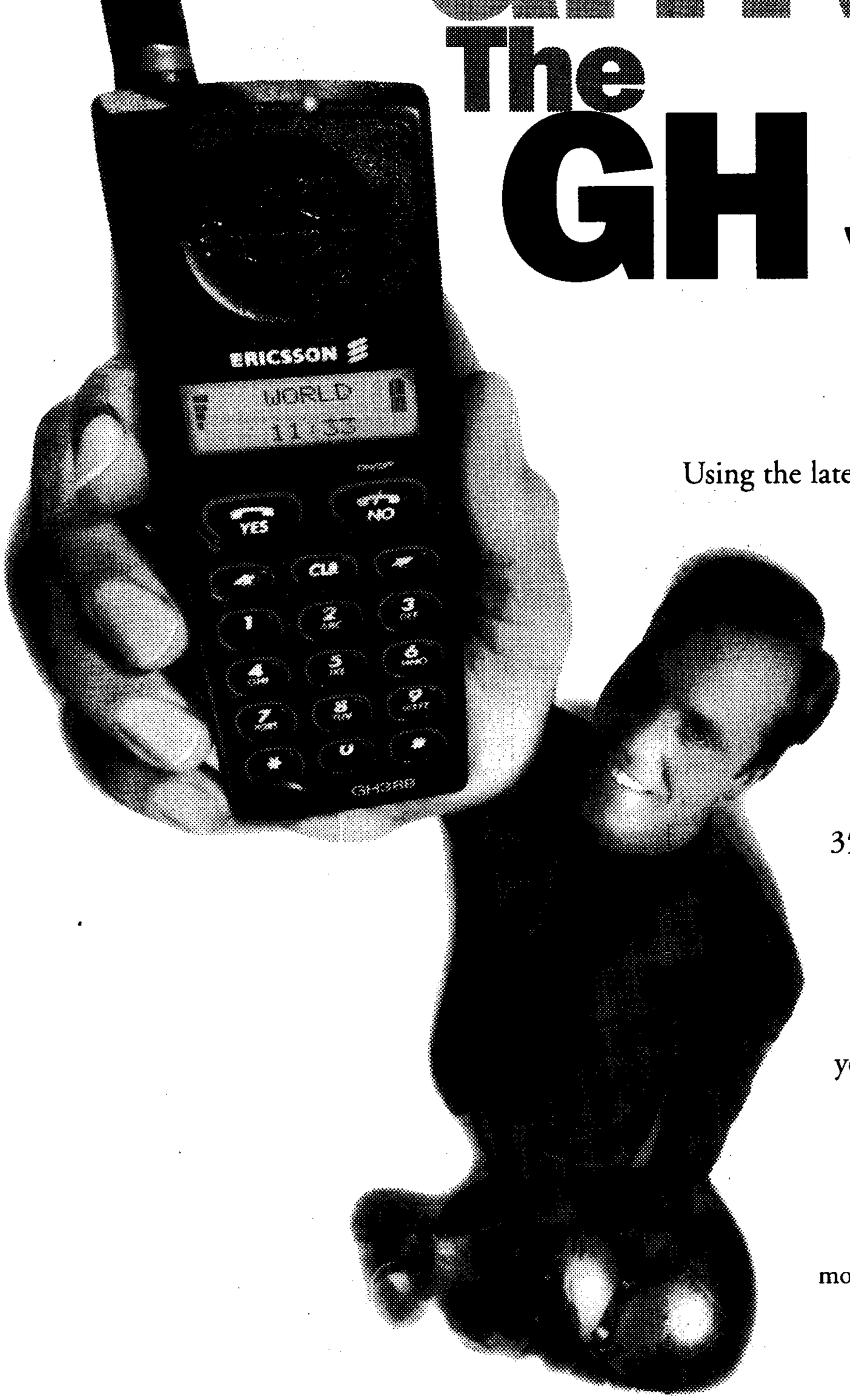

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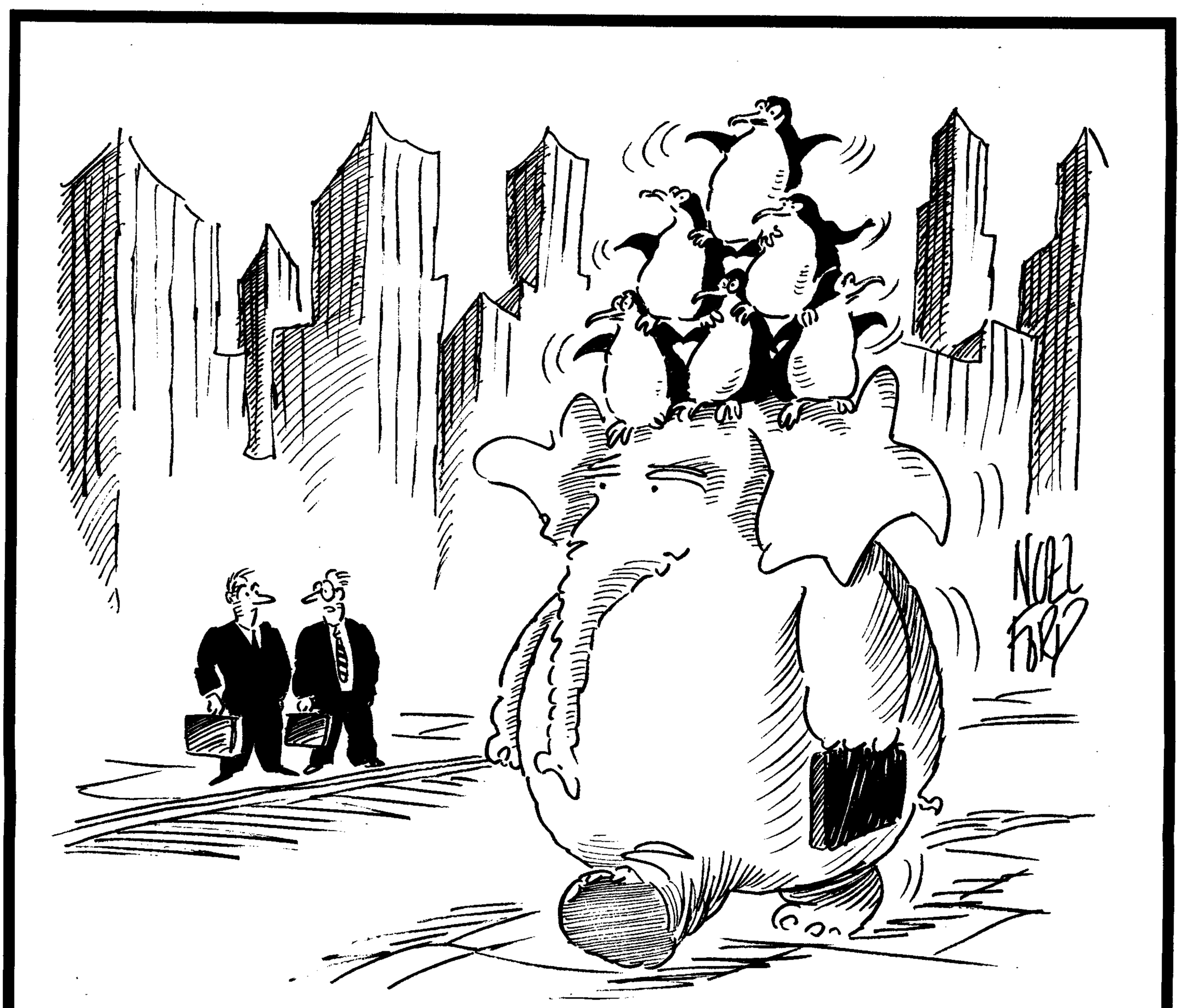

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Gnome

An Announcement

DESPITE the recent scaremongering in the media, the McGnome chain of fast-food restaurants will continue to serve their legendary McGnome burgers as usual.

Customers need however have no worries about their favourite food and, as chairman of McGnomes, I can assure them that their delicious "Big Gnome" carries no health risk at all.

You ask me "How can you be sure that your beefburgers are absolutely safe?"

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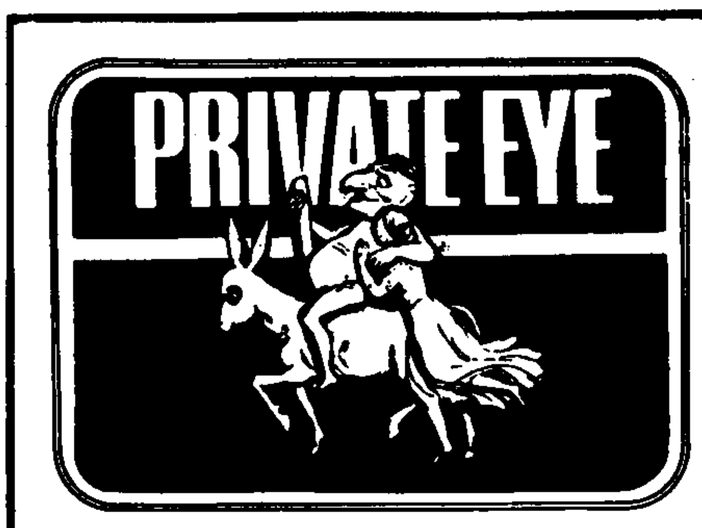

COLOUR SECTION

THE speaker's office and the Labour whips' office were both involved in cobbling together a big MPs' freebie to Saudi Arabia from 15 to 21 March.

Its purpose was to show the Saudis that MPs of all parties are not in the least bit influenced by the sensationalism of the BBC, whose *Panorama* was about to broadcast a rather silly attack on the number of public executions in the Saudi kingdom. (The programme was "held over" twice until finally shown on April 2).

The delegation — five Tories, five Labour and one Ulster Unionist — was large even by the standards of MPs' freebies. It was led, inevitably, by Jonathan Aitken, the Saudi dynasty's most loyal friend and paid consultant. The other four Tories were Lady Olga Maitland (Sutton and Cheam); Harold Elletson (Blackpool North); Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding); and David Nicholson (Taunton). The five Labour MPs were: Adam Ingram (East Kilbride), a former PPS to Neil Kinnock; Paul Murphy (Torfaen), who speaks for the opposition on foreign affairs; Tom McAvoy (Glasgow, Rutherglen); David Clelland (Tyne Bridge); and David Young (Bolton South East).

The visit, which was paid for entirely by the "Royal Saudi Embassy", would have been kept decently secret had it not been for the Ulster Unionist Roy Beggs (East Antrim). Beggs was so struck by the glory of the Saudi system he could not resist conveying it to the outside world.

"The high standard of education, health care and economic prosperity of Saudi Arabia was in evidence throughout Riyadh," he drooled. The MPs, he said, were specially impressed by the Shura council, which is chosen by the royal family to advise the royal family what to do.

Mr Beggs had no complaint at all about the total lack of democracy in the kingdom nor of the constant recourse to executions. He had nothing to say about the recent execution, highlighted by *Panorama*, of Neil Tubo, a Filipino who had his head cut off in public for rapes and murders of which the families of the victims say he is entirely innocent.

Perhaps Mr Beggs's silence on the Saudi criminal law was connected to his own appearance in the dock at Larne magistrates' court on the day before he left for Riyadh. He was convicted of inciting an Orange mob to blockade a road outside Larne last July. He was fined £1,350. If he had been convicted of such an offence in Saudi Arabia his head would have been chopped off.

IN THE wake of the Dunblane massacre no one could be lobbying harder for the ban of hand guns than David Mellor MP. But those members of the pro-gun lobby criticised by Mellor for their inactivity might like to refer to the Putney MP's own record.

Mellor was a home office minister during the 1987 Hungerford tragedy. That year he wrote to one constituent and congenially scrawled on the note: "I stood up for the rights of shooters in *Question Time* on Thursday."

Could this be the same man who, nine years on, says: "When the public has forgotten the horror of Dunblane the gun lobbyists will be coming out with their garbage"? He continues: "Twice in 10 years we've had these maniacs from these gun clubs busting out and killing innocent people."

Strangely on the 1987 *Question Time* programme which Mellor mentioned to his constituent, the MP said: "We have law-abiding people, hundreds of thousands of them actually, who use guns either in the context of gun clubs or for sporting purposes." He later added in defence of gun club members that the government must not "rampage off, stamping on the rights of perfectly decent fellow citizens of ours because we are outraged".

In *Eye* 894, we detailed Mellor's paid consultancy with British Aerospace, which incorporates weapon-producing companies like Vosper Thorneycroft and RACAL Tacticom. Yet another subsidiary of BAe is Heckler and Koch, of course, one of the leading manufacturers of handguns which Mellor is so keen to see banned. Its Universal Service Pistol has huge sales across the world and is a particular favourite with American citizens.

NOTHING illustrates the close cooperation between the ministry of agriculture and the animal feed industry — especially the cattle-feeding industry — better than the recent career of Mr G.A. Hollis.

Until a few days ago Mr Hollis was a career civil servant at the ministry of agriculture, fisheries and food (MAFF). He rose to the very high rank of grade three, and was head of MAFF's livestock group, which has recently been wrestling with the BSE crisis.

In 1992 he was appointed a non-executive director of Lucas Ingredients, a subsidiary of the huge food combine Dalgety, which describes itself in its latest annual report (over a moving picture of a cow grazing over a map of Great Britain) as "the UK's leading agricultural supplier of compound animal feed and arable products".

Mr Hollis sat in on board meetings of Lucas Ingredients, while back in his day job at the ministry he would wrestle with government policy on livestock. A ministry spokeswoman told the *Eye*: "He has just retired and is in Spain."

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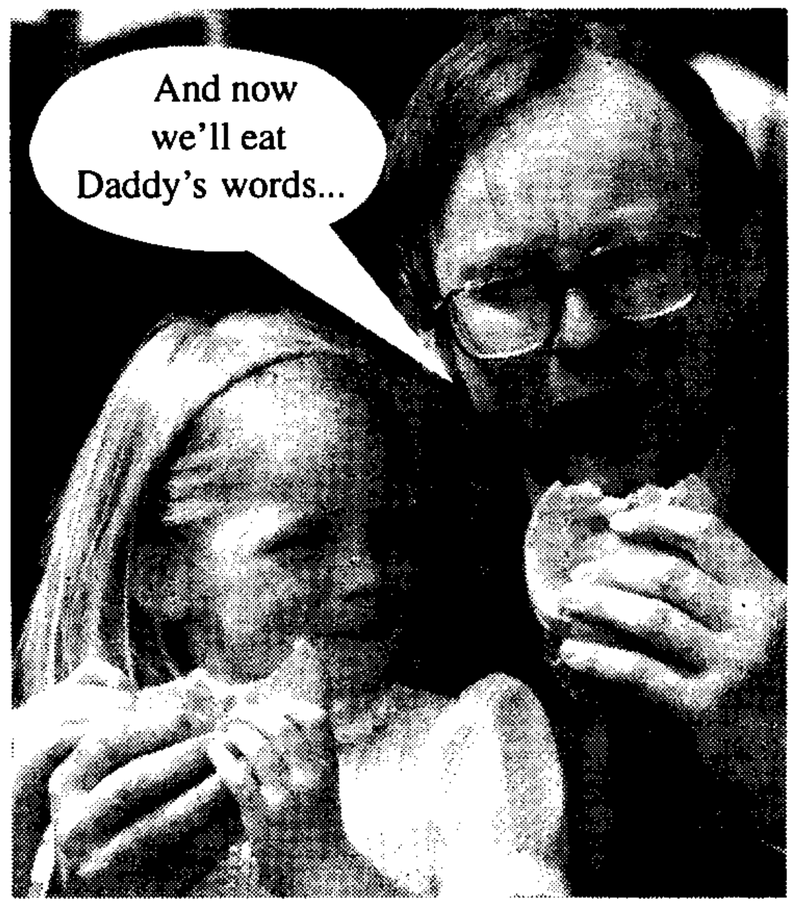
GUMMER GOES MAD



Street of Shame

THE *Observer* was conspicuous by its absence from the list of winners in last week's British Press Awards, organised by *UK Press Gazette*. The reason was embarrassingly simple: *UKPG* had put all the *Observer*'s entries in a cupboard and forgotten about them.

To make amends the mag agreed to run a full-page puff piece about Andrew Jaspan, celebrating the first anniversary of his appointment at the *Observer* as editor. "I am extremely hopeful, very optimistic about the direction the paper's going in," he boasted. "You ain't seen nothing yet!" He also paid tribute to his paper's owners, the Scott Trust, for "providing us with the ability to produce newspapers without proprietorial or shareholder interference."

Whoops! Last Friday morning, a mere week after the interview appeared, Jaspan was telephoned at home and told that the Scott Trust had fired him. Soon afterwards, a contrite Hugo Young, one of the Scott Trustees, broke the news to *Observer* hacks. "The trust owes you a sort of apology," he announced meekly. "We haven't given you the leadership you deserve."

The eviction of Jaspan — who was not even allowed to return to the office to clear his desk — is a triumph for *Grauniad* editor Alan Rusbridger, who masterminded the *coup*. More impressively still, the wily Rubbisher has outmanoeuvred his old mentor Peter Preston, who was in Israel last week when he learned that he had been sacked as editor-in-chief of both papers. "It's positively Shakespearean," one *Grauniad* veteran commented. "Preston was editor of the *Guardian* from 1975 to 1995. He created Rusbridger, he anointed him as editor — and now Rusbridger tells him 'I know thee not, old man'."

Meanwhile, although hacks at the *Grauniad* and *Observer* have been told the company is strapped for cash, no such belt-tightening is evident in the papers' ever-expanding marketing, promotion and "human resources" departments, whose entire staff flew to Barcelona last Friday for a "morale-boosting weekend". The highlight of this expensive jaunt was a session in which Rusbridger was "interviewed" by TV presenter Miranda Sawyer.

Why did Rusbridger have to go all the way to Spain to deliver a pep talk which could have taken place in an office in Farringdon Road? No doubt members of the Scott Trust, perusing the *Observer*'s disastrous balance-sheet, will be far too polite to press the all-conquering Rusbridger for an explanation.

READERS of the *Sunday Telegraph* may be puzzled by the recent transformation in their beloved organ. The home news pages — previously a haven for exquisitely dull stories about the Garrick Club — are suddenly awash with sex.

Two weeks ago, most of page 3 was given over to a ludicrous yarn about ramblers in the Mole Valley being accosted by prostitutes. This *exposé* of "seedy practices in the Surrey countryside" was followed by another slavering scoop on page 3 last Sunday, revealing that "the coach of the British men's Olympic hockey squad has left his wife and family to move in with the coach of the women's Olympic hockey team".

Any complaints about this eruption of tabloid-style sleaze should be addressed to Chris Anderson, the *Torygraph*'s newly-appointed news editor. He was previously employed as a senior hack on... the *News of the Screws*.

HACKS at the *Indie* are indignant at the sacking of Nigel Willmott. He is a blameless sub-editor whose competence has never been questioned. So why has he been axed?

Surely it couldn't be related to the fact that he is also the father of the NUJ chapel (i.e. shop steward) at the paper?

WHEN the media withdrew from Dunblane to allow the funerals of the children and their teacher to go ahead privately, one newspaper could not pass up the chance of a picture exclusive.

The paper was David "Rommel" Montgomery's *Daily Mirror*; and when an outraged reader saw its long distance photo of one of the children's funerals she telephoned to complain.

A *Mirror* hack told her the picture wasn't taken by one of the rag's photographers but by the Press Association. Even so, the angry *Mirror* reader persisted, why had the paper published it when her other paper, the *Guardian*, had kept well away?

"That's because the *Guardian*'s a shit paper," growled the charming *Mirror* hack before slamming down the phone.

FOOOTBALL fans have been treated to a long *Guardian* feature on plans to launch a daily and a Sunday soccer paper in Britain.

The article asked "Could it survive?", and the conclusion drawn by the writer John Duncan, with help from Roy Greenslade, was that the Sunday paper has the best chance of success.

FACT: Duncan is managing editor of soon-to-be launched *Soccer on Sunday* — a fact he completely forgot to mention.

HACKWATCH: A LOAD OF BULL

THE Daily Mirror was immensely pleased with itself last week, boasting that its coverage of the mad cow affair had prompted the government to come clean.

"We are proud to have led the way," it crowed. "But we would prefer that it did not take outside pressure to stir this government into action. Sadly, the mad cow disaster has been a tale of one blunder after another."

Perhaps one reason for the government's inaction was that ministers had believed a piece which appeared in the *Daily Mirror* on 24 January 1990, headed: "Is Your Sunday Joint Safe?" It offered "the truth about mad cow disease" in the easily digestible Q&A format so beloved of the tabloids: "Can humans catch BSE? No — as far as experts can tell... So beef is safe to eat? Yes..." The article reassured *Mirror* readers that the government was on top of the situation, having banned the use of sheep offal in cattle-feed and spent £12 million on research into the disease.

While the *Mirror* lurched from complacency to angry panic, the **Sun** has done exactly the opposite, noisily insisting that the risk of infection from beef is negligible. "HAS THE WORLD GONE MAD?" screamed a front-page editorial last Tuesday. "Hysteria has taken over from commonsense as we contemplate destroying the beef and dairy industry — and four million cattle — because of yet another food scare. *And that's all it is. A SCARE...* So hands off our cows. Eat beef. *And stop talking bullocks.*"

Never mind the bullocks: what about the *Sun*'s own contribution to the scaremongering. As long ago as 12 May 1990 it ran a long and alarmist feature by *Sun* doctor Vernon Coleman warning that "mad cow disease could be the biggest threat to human health since the Black Death plague that killed millions in Europe in the 14th century... In my view, there is already evidence to show that mad cow disease is a bigger threat to humans than AIDS ever was. Over the last 15 years, my predictions about health hazards have invariably been proved right." Is the *Sun* now telling us that its resident medical expert was mad?

The **Daily Express**, usually the government's most reliable supporter, has turned dangerously disloyal. "Much of the supposed evidence about BSE and its human equivalent is contradictory," it commented on 22 March. "There are, as yet, no final answers... Had the government been more circumspect in the past its credibility would not now lie in tatters." But the *Daily Express* has not always been so circumspect itself. On 29 June 1994, when the Germans imposed a six-month ban on British beef imports, the paper thunderously attacked "paranoia about mad cow disease". Fears about BSE were "groundless".

The **Daily Telegraph** was equally incensed by that earlier German ban. "The scientific evidence is that the measures Britain has taken to contain the menace of BSE — the so-called mad cow disease — are fully adequate," it claimed in an editorial on 29 June 1994. How odd, then, that the selfsame *Daily Telegraph* now rebukes people who take refuge in scientific evidence. "The government can never shrug off its responsibilities on to experts," it pontificated two weeks ago. "No matter how categorical scientific opinion may be — and, as Stephen Glover points out on the opposite page, to date it has been anything but — it will have to be weighed against all the other considerations."

The **Sunday Telegraph** also weighed in with a lofty editorial on the cow crisis. "Consumer scares are now a part of our culture," it complained wearily. "Each scare produces the same pattern of hyperbole and response. An 'expert' publishes a paper; a newspaper picks up the statistics; for a few days everyone talks of nothing else... Rarely do the scares have anything to do with the level of risk... The truth is that we are now comfortable hypochondriacs."

The *Sunday Telegraph* should know: only a few years ago it was proudly claiming the credit for having started the BSE scare. In a story headed "Raging Madness Attacks Cattle", published on 24 April 1988, it revealed the existence of "a mystery disease which riddles cows' brains with holes and drives them mad". Noting that meat from affected cattle had been sold to the public, it warned of "the possibility of the disease spreading to humans".

Over at the **Times** blame has been distributed equally between ministers and farmers. "In many ways it is the very success of British agriculture, its arrogance in believing that it can go against nature in feeding cattle, that has so contributed to the BSE catastrophe," it argued on 22 March. This may come as a surprise to any *Times* readers who recall an editorial from 7 May 1990: "Whether nature has a taboo against feeding vegetarian animals to each other is for biologically-minded mystics to discuss. The rest of us can have no complaint at such profitable ingenuity."

In its leader column two weeks ago, the Thunderer was sympathetic to countries such as France and Germany which had banned British beef: "Their action is illegal; but their response entirely understandable." Compare and contrast this with the *Times*'s furious attitude on 1 June 1990: "The French government's decision to prohibit the import of British beef and live cattle is an act of naked protectionism." It even argued that France should be suspended from membership of the European community until it agreed to accept British beef.

Meanwhile, the dear old **Grauniad** has been changing its mind from day to day. On 21 March, immediately after Stephen Dorrell's first statement, it announced: "We are all guilty about beef: farmers most of all." By 22 March, however, it was having second thoughts: "Who are the true victims: consumers or farmers? No one knows..." A mere 24 hours after lambasting farmers, the *Guardian* was now pleading on their behalf that a mass-slaughter of cows would be "unnecessary".

No one was more delighted by this editorial shift than the Tory MP Paul Marland, who farms 1,000 acres in Gloucestershire and had urged people "not to overreact over this whole business". By an amazing coincidence, his wife, Caroline Marland, is the managing director of the *Grauniad*.

Private I-I-I!

THIS ISSUE'S rundown of the nation's most self-obsessed columnists, based on the number of incidences of the word "I" per column-inch.

		Ego Rating
1	Michael Winner (Sunday Times 24/3) . .	2.75
2	Julie Myerson (Independent 25/3) . . .	2.50
3	Marianne Faithfull (Daily Telegraph 23/3)	2.10
4	Zoe Heller (Sunday Times 31/3)	2.06
5	Mary Ann Sieghart (Times 23/3)	2.00
6	Michael Bywater (IoS 24/3)	1.88
7	Alan Coren (Times 27/3)	1.83
8	John Lyttle (Independent 29/3)	1.82
9	Peter Hitchens (Daily Express 29/3) . . .	1.55
10	Annabel Heseltine (Sunday Times 24/3)	1.46

MIKE "Heffalump" Hardwick, managing director of drearily right-on London listings mag *Time Out*, has been exercising his charm again (*Eye* 891) — this time in the direction of three office cleaners.

One night when the three had finished work at *TO*'s hip offices, long after other staff had left, they *locked up* and left for the night. What they failed to realise was that Heffalump was asleep under his desk after an afternoon of very heavy, er, meetings.

When he awoke the md was furious to find himself locked in his own offices and unable to escape. A few days later a *Time Out* underling was ordered to phone the bewildered cleaners, one of whom was eight months pregnant, and to sack them on the spot.

FIREMEN were called to the scene of a rash in Kenilworth Road, Ashford, on Monday night

Staines & Ashford News

PARKING SENSATION

YET another civil servant making a comfortable transfer from the public sector to a private company is Christopher Tye, until earlier this year head of the civil business branch of the courts service, an agency of the lord chancellor's department.

While there he did policy work on the collection of parking ticket fines, a process which was being "civilianised" and put into the hands of private firms of bailiffs. Now Tye has taken early retirement from the lord chancellor's department and has sought permission to take up employment elsewhere. This has been granted, and the *Eye* is happy to report that Tye has been offered a job — as consultant to Drakes Group Ltd, a firm of bailiffs largely responsible for the collection of parking ticket fines.

When the *Eye* asked the lord chancellor's department if it was concerned about a possible conflict of interest in Tye taking this new job considering his former role it replied: "No, Drakes simply want someone around who can deal with government departments."

"Oh no! Not another new dress!"

HALLO! THE HEARTWARMING COLUMN

HALLO! ONCE again the saintly Duchess of Freebiana, sparing no effort for charity, has suffered cruel ridicule. Its so unfair after la Freebiana jetted all the way to the romantic gulf sheikdom of Qatar to take part in a 26-mile desert horse race.

The cost to the infatuated Qatar sheiks of transporting and entertaining Fergie and her entourage of four, was considerably in excess of £10,000. But the Duchess was being sponsored by a local oil company at £200 per mile, so having finished the course she will have raised at least £5,000 for charity — a bargain whichever way you look at it.

This trip was more sedate than three months ago when there was a bit of upset after Fergie hosted a late night party for her new tennis star friend, Thomas Muster. In this strict Islamic country, booze is only available to westerners and in certain hotels. Bars are known as "libraries" and guests must sign for a library ticket to gain admission.

For some reason after the Duchess's last visit, hotel alcohol licences were revoked for several weeks.

HALLO! *AS if the beef scare weren't enough, a new culinary hazard has emerged: nibbling a Linda McCartney vegetarian sausage, which may contain cardboard.*

This was the experience of Victoria Buckley, whose 19-month-old baby started choking on a piece of card after eating one of the Linda's bangers. Ms Buckley recovered the object and complained loudly to the company.

How did the caring vegetarians respond having nearly choked a small child? They sent a letter apologising for the "piece of cardboard originating from the box flap of a raw material packaging" and a cheque "without prejudice" for a measly fifteen quid.

HALLO! TO THE Gandhi restaurant in south London, where shy and retiring bachelor Michael Fabricant, Tory MP for Mid-Staffs, is sharing political insights at the top of his voice.

Michael is wearing an impressive new hairpiece, which is clearly thirsty work: a bottle of St Emilion is demolished within an hour. We diners are then held spellbound by his observations.

He expects to be the only sane MP left after the next general election, when he fears he will be "surrounded by crazed Portillo supporters... this will make me the Julian Critchley of my generation." John Major doesn't like him much, he says, because he is flippant. "When Major asked me how things were going I said 'I'm not going to give up my day job'."

Michael doesn't reckon Gillian Shephard could ever become PM because "she is almost as bad at the despatch box as Major". Rather, he believes the "marvellous" Ulster Unionist MP David Trimble "would make an excellent leader of the Tory party".

Unable to accuse his local Labour councils in Staffordshire of being "loony left" because they are well-run, Michael then reveals his chagrin that every other MP seems to be bonking away like mad except him. With that his shoes fall off, he thanks the chef in his stockinged feet — and, with white coats flapping in the breeze outside, he makes his less than graceful exit.

HALLO! *MY OLD penfriend Harold Pinter is growing more cussed and Pinteresque with age, and quite outdid himself one recent lunchtime at the Almeida theatre in Islington.*

Retiring to the bar, he first demanded the music be turned down. Then he ordered the Islington internationalist's favourite tipple, the Spanish red, Sangre del Torre. The bar had run out so Harold, naturally, demanded a peon be dispatched to the local store. He also requested two bottles for the interval.

Such is the sullen nature of the lumpen masses nowadays that the poor man was forced to invoke the name of the Almeida's artistic director. "Ian McDiarmid," he announced loudly, "would like me to have this drink."

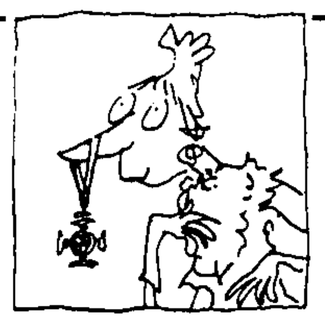
When even this failed to impress the proletarian philistines, the great guerilliero playwright had to play his trump. "I," he informed bemused bar staff, "am Harold Pinter." 'Course you are, dear.

HALLO! WHILE poor Lord Brocket has begun to serve his five-year porridge for a measly £4.5 million insurance swindle, his magnificent stately home, Brocket Hall, may be have to be sold.

It is currently owned by Midland Bank, which is still owed more than £16 million for helping the dim former cavalry officer transform the Hertfordshire mansion into a conference centre.

Midland has found a potential buyer, I hear. Step forward suave sophisticate Dave "The Slug" Sullivan, owner of Birmingham City football club and publisher of various lively porn titles. Just the man to restore its reputation!

'The Marquesa'



O·B·N

THIS time last year I was gossiping with Madonna at an Oscars party in Los Angeles.

Bob and I had just separated and Maddy really did help to put a smile back on my face.

For a superstar, she was astonishingly friendly and quite the girlie.

I only hope that I can get back to Los Angeles next year to see her collect her Oscar for Evita.

PAULA YATES
The Sun

Submitted by Tim Mallinson.

£10 paid for all entries put forward for the Order of the Brown Nose.

DEFENCE secretary Michael Portillo's attempts to save taxpayers' money by selling off the Royal Maritime Auxiliary Service, the MoD organisation which runs dockside tugs, are unlikely to impress people in Plymouth.

On 12 March there was an incident there involving the 4,500 tonne nuclear submarine Torbay, which was trying to leave Plymouth Sound when its steering failed and for half an hour it was out of control. It came close to collision with Drake's Island but was finally secured by two tugs.

Navy chiefs claim the emergency steering system locked on almost immediately and there was no danger. Nevertheless the 130 crew, under the leadership of commanding officer Geoff Thomas, were said to have been "shitting themselves" when they were within a quarter of a mile of hitting rocks.

While all this was happening Portillo was turning a deaf ear to protests at plans to sell off the tugs. The in-house team had its bid rejected on grounds of "non compliance with the task". In other words, people who are doing the job already cannot apparently be trusted to do it in the future. This is rather odd because the in-house team's bid was 3 percent cheaper than the winning consortium — Denholm/Serco and the Ocean Group — which stands to make around £180 million over the next five years.

SHIPPING minister Viscount Goschen has assured Labour's Graham Allen that the safety of seafarers off the UK coast "will not be compromised by any financial considerations".

Why, then, is it being left to chance that Mayday distress calls over the emergency 2182 radio frequency are picked up by the coastguard?

Once there were designated staff listening to this frequency, but now it is merely relayed over a loudspeaker into busy coastguard ops rooms where officers are frequently wearing headsets and listening to other frequencies.

On at least two occasions recently Mayday messages have been missed by the nearest coastguard stations, with consequent delays in rescues. No doubt someone will have to die before the cut is revised.

THE high court recently asked Labour's national executive committee (NEC) to reconsider its imposition of a parliamentary candidate in Swindon North — a ruling that has implications far beyond the constituency.

The NEC cannot afford to reexamine its decision in Wiltshire because to do so would open a Pandora's Box. The judge made his ruling because, he said, the NEC decision was based on "gross exaggeration and misleading claims" made to the NEC, and because the party's director of organisation, Peter Coleman, had breached natural justice.

If the party does reopen its consideration of the selection procedure in Swindon North, a raft of other decisions — beginning with the case of "Lefty" Liz Davies in Leeds (see *Eyes passim*) — would have to be looked at again.

Comrade Coleman actually wrote to the press explaining why Ms Davies was guilty when he was supposedly collecting evidence to allow the NEC to decide whether she was innocent or not. A clearer breach of natural justice it would be hard to imagine.

HAPPILY Sir Marcus Fox MP isn't too busy as chairman of the reactionary backbench 1922 committee to hold seven remunerated directorships and five consultancies.

One of these, at Illingworth Morris Ltd, has caused the Shipley MP a few concerns, however. First there was the embarrassing occasion when Illingworth Morris bought green belt land to build on in Bingley where Sir Marcus is both a resident and the local MP (see *Eye* 871).

Then there was the case of one of Fox's constituents, Keith Butler, who worked for Illingworth Morris and had to retire early last year on the grounds of ill health. After Butler had left the firm, Illingworth Morris reneged on its agreement to give him an ill health pension.

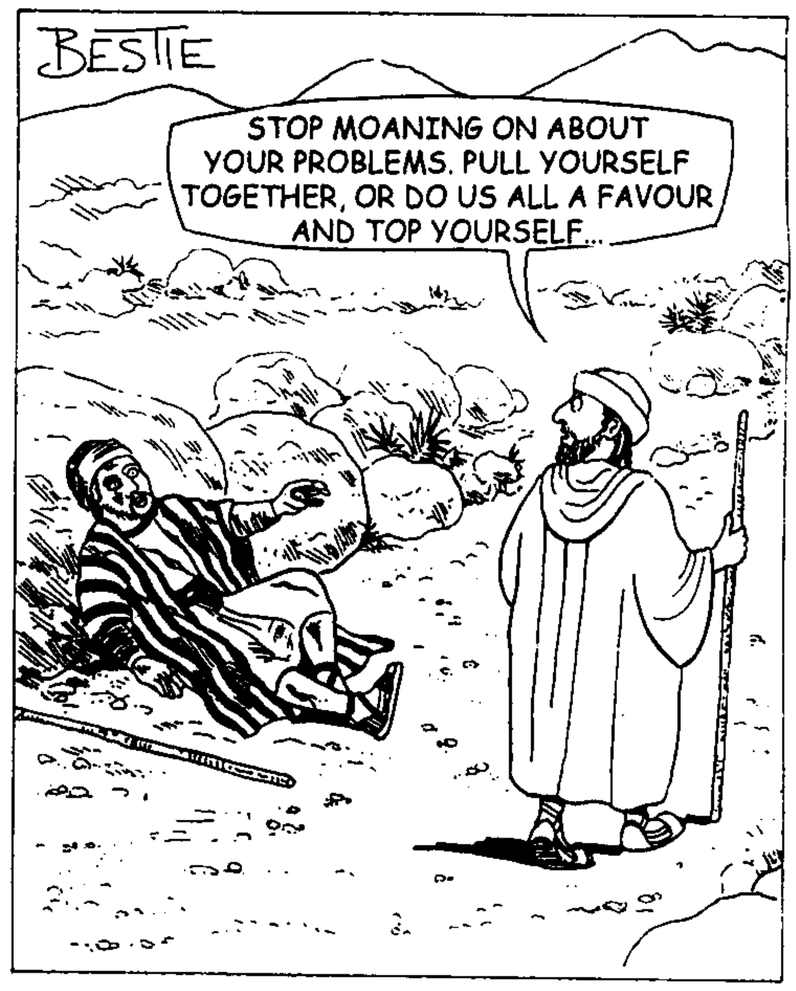
When Butler fixed a date in December for his tribunal hearing, Illingworth Morris quickly settled out of court. During the dispute, Butler had written to his local MP asking for help. Fox replied that the company had made it clear that it had made its highest offer and that it was a very generous one. "In matters of this kind, MPs are limited in the action which they can take," oiled Sir Marcus.

Of course his directorship did not affect his fervent fight for his constituent's interests.

THE 54th Tory MP to desert the sinking ship is Tristan Garel-Jones, the MP for Watford who entertains John Major in his villa in Spain.

Garel-Jones marked his decision with an extended job advert — sorry, interview — in the *Financial Times* in which he said he was leaving because he was sure the Tories would win the next election.

Curiously there was no mention of his staggering losses at Lloyd's, from which he resigned in 1990, and his need to make a lot of money quickly. Nor was there a hint as to whether he will continue to be employed by all four big companies which paid him while he was an MP: BP, British Gas, Union Bank of Switzerland and Biwater.



The Bad Samaritan

GOVERNMENT radiation scientists studying cases of childhood leukaemia at Sellafield — where the incidence is 14 times greater than would be expected from the level of radiation officially said to exist around the plant — have reached a brilliant conclusion: the cause cannot be radiation.

Instead, in a report they cite a sewage outlet and a mystery virus. Despite all the years that radiation has been studied, no one has ever identified the virus and no similar cluster of cases of childhood leukaemia has been found around other sewage outfalls elsewhere in the country. A simpler explanation could be that the level of radioactive releases from Sellafield have been understated due, shall we say, to human error.

'Backbiter'

Referendum Special

SIR Jammy Fishpaste's bid for world domination continues apace, and Conservative central office is in a state of near-panic. Even John Major has been sending desperate pleas to the tycoon, via an intermediary, begging him not to carry out his threat to put up hundreds of pro-referendum candidates at the general election.

A closer look at the Referendum party suggests that Tory fears are misplaced. In spite of Sir Jam's alluring £20 million budget, so far his party seems to consist largely of has-beens, eccentrics and accident-prone nincompoops.

The party's supreme ruler — second only to Goldsmith himself, of course — is one Patrick Robertson, a bumptious youngster with a somewhat chequered record. In 1989, while still a student at Oxford, he founded the Bruges Group and swiftly attracted the sponsorship of Margaret Thatcher, Lord Forte, Lord Harris of High Cross and other right-wing grandees. Within a couple of years, however, he had managed to alienate many supporters with his ill-considered remarks and his rather slapdash attitude to money: Alan Sked, a co-founder of the group, is still owed £500 that he lent Robertson at the time. A former employee of the Bruges Group, Andrew Dodge, has given a succinct summary of Robertson's management techniques: "He treats people like shit."

Robertson later set himself up as a PR consultant to the great and the good, with mixed results. Last year he wrote a highly confidential memo to Jonathan Aitken, advising him on how to keep the press at bay. Alas! It was faxed to the wrong number and promptly splashed all over the front page of the *Independent on Sunday*. Still, Goldsmith obviously has a high regard for his talents.

Although Sir James has promised that we'll be impressed by the calibre of his candidates — including plenty of big names — this was scarcely borne out by the motley collection who gathered at the Holiday Inn Garden Court Hotel in Edinburgh two weeks ago for a "candidates' training weekend". According to one Euro-sceptic who attended, most of them were "political ingenues" who were "very unaware of anything but a gut feeling of unease about Europe", while the Referendum party leaders who turned up were "pretty small beer".

The weekend was presided over by a burly chap who introduced himself as Douglas Smith. He informed candidates that he was a "Tory-trained" analyst and had been involved in politics since he was a student. Beyond that, he refused to elaborate.

His reticence is understandable. In the early 1980s, while working at the Adam Smith Institute, Douglas Smith was a leading member of the loony-right faction in the Federation of Conservative Students. Elected as an FCS vice-chairman at the 1985 Loughborough conference, he claimed to be a student at Napier College, when in fact he was nothing of the kind. (He had briefly been at student at Strathclyde University but had dropped out before finishing the course.) Following an inquiry by Conservative central office, Smith's election was declared null and void.

In April 1990 Smith was arrested by Hammersmith police after allegedly threatening to kill a fellow FCS member, Toby Baxendale. (The cause of their dispute was a young woman from the LSE who had transferred her affections from Smith to Baxendale.) After a night in the cells, however, he was released. He was later employed by the ultra-rightwing millionaire David Hart at the mysterious "Committee for a Free Britain".

Smith's intimidating demeanour was enough to ensure that most candidates at the recent Scottish weekend were on their best behaviour. The only dissident voice came from Iain McGregor, a veteran anti-marketeer from Edinburgh, who demanded to know why the Referendum party hadn't been getting better press coverage. The party's "campaign manager", Judith Duckworth, explained that this was a deliberate strategy on the part of Patrick Robertson: the party was meant to be like a submarine — surfacing, disappearing again, and so on. It would then launch "with a splash" at a two-day conference in Brighton next October, at which there would be a grand parade of candidates whose daunting splendour would amaze and inspire the whole nation.

McGregor remained unconvinced, citing the affair of the Jonathan Aitken fax as proof of Robertson's incompetence — whereupon he was angrily slapped down by Duckworth, who told him that he had two hours to "consider his position" during the lunch break. He gathered up his papers and departed, never to return.

One candidate down; only another 600 to go...

NOOKS and CORNERS

THE cinema is 100 years old this year. No building expressly designed for showing moving films is so ancient, but a few early cinemas do survive. One such is the Dome at Worthing.

Designed by T.A. Allen and opened by Carl Seebold as the Kursaal in 1911, the building, with its tall domed octagonal tower on the Promenade, is considered by English Heritage to be "one of the most complete surviving examples of an early cinema in the country".

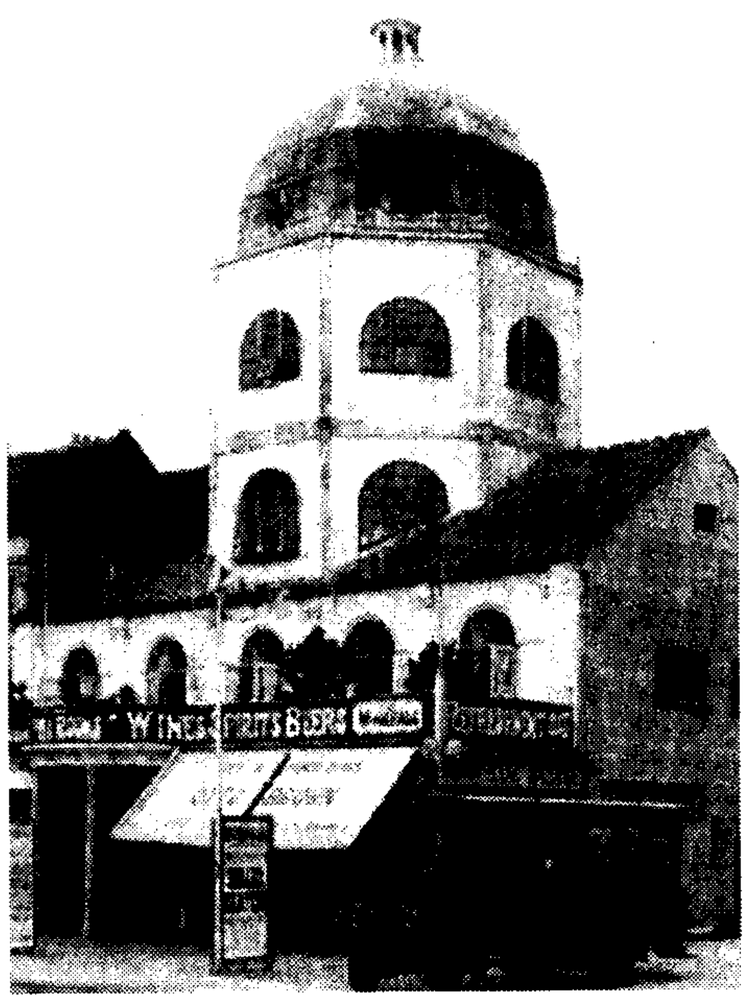
The Dome is the town's last remaining commercial cinema and is now owned by Worthing borough council. It has been in continuous use for showing films for 85 years. So what are the good councillors doing with the Dome to mark the centenary of the movies? Er, selling off the building to a "locally based leisure company" which plans to convert the interior for a "wide range of leisure uses" including *a night club* and — perhaps, perhaps not — a small cinema tucked away somewhere.

Possibly this is a small mercy. As aged readers may recall, the poor old Dome has appeared before in this column when, in 1988, the Conservative council tried to demolish it altogether because of its poor structural condition [*Eye* 689]. That threat was averted by a vigorous Save the Dome campaign, a petition signed by 35,000 and by the listing of the building in 1989 — grade II. But the council does not give up that easily. In 1993 it tried, in vain, to lease the Dome to a multiplex operator. Now, claiming that it cannot afford to restore the building, it has almost succeeded in selling off the freehold.

This has been achieved by Peter Bennett, chairman of the policy and resources committee which, in a secret session, recommended the sale of the Dome to the Chapman Group. This decision was then endorsed, without a vote, at a session of the full council. Quite why is not clear: the price offered is a mere £151,000, which is only five times the annual rental from Robins Cinemas Ltd and the other tenants of the Dome. It is also throwing away the money that, after years of malicious neglect, the council finally spent on necessary repairs (though much more needs to be done).

This sale and change of use is opposed by the Cinema Theatre Association, the Victorian Society and the Twentieth Century Society, while English Heritage is anxious that no alteration is made which will affect the character of the building. The decision by the council also treats with contempt the Dome Preservation Trust, which has pleaded for more time to put in a bid for lottery funds to restore the building and add a multi-screen cinema and a museum of the cinema. This seems sensible, since cinema attendances are actually rising.

However, Mr Chris Chapman is certainly "locally based": the father and grandfather of this pub and nightclub owner were mayors of Worthing, while his brother is a councillor (who of course declared an interest at the crucial meetings).



Unlike in 1988, the Council is no longer Conservative. The majority of the councillors who are happy to sell off assets at secret meetings without public discussion and who are prepared to see the extinction of one of the oldest cinemas in Britain were elected in the Liberal Democrat interest — and several of them, including the chairman of the policy and resources committee, signed that petition to Save the Dome all those years ago.

'Piloti'

SIGNAL FAILURES

RAILTRACK faces the same future after privatisation as British Gas would have if the price of a unit of energy generated by gas was 100 times greater than the same unit supplied by electricity.

Our railways and roads compete to supply the same service — transport — just as gas and electricity compete. But railways are far more expensive than roads to transport users and will inevitably lose more custom. Train operators pay to use the national infrastructure through track access charges, while road users pay through the annual road tax. These fees are an order of magnitude apart: the equivalent to the track access charges would be an annual road tax of £1,095,000 for every road coach (see *Eye* 868).

The difference is down to accounting methods that stem from the 1960s belief that our economy depends on roads while railways are a social service that need to be phased out. Consecutive governments have been happy to overlook the costs to the country of road transport. Road congestion, accidents and pollution alone are estimated by the European commission to cost Britain £30 billion a year, compared with about £14 billion collected in road duty and fuel tax.

Free market rail would stand a chance if these disparate accounting systems were harmonised. Under such a system road users would pay according to distance travelled and the charges would reflect the costs attributable to each user. It might therefore cost 161,600 times more to operate a lorry than a car (a loaded 32.5-tonne lorry causes 165,000 times more damage to the roads than a car). This arrangement would at last show what road transport really costs and enable society to take rational decisions about where to apply subsidy and for what benefit. It would also give rail a chance to compete in the transport market for custom and subsidy.

The chances of harmonisation occurring are nil, at least while it is still practical to drive in our cities and while there are still some children who do not suffer from chronic asthma. In the short term, drastic loss of traffic is in Railtrack's interests. Long branch lines used only for freight could be sold for scrap and land value, while city centre stations, such as London Euston, could be sold to property developers and the remaining trains diverted to other stations or truncated at new edge-of-town stations. Reduced rail traffic would generate cash for Railtrack to bank and ease its most onerous liabilities and chores, such as safety and timetable planning.

'Dr B. Ching'

Pseuds Corner

As conceited as this may sound, I understand what it is to be cool. Style is not just about clothes; it's about strutting, personality, charisma, all of which I possess in abundance.

CHRIS EUBANK
Brighton Argus

If real people playing real games succeed in finding their way to an equilibrium of the game, it is not because they are the omniscient, lightning calculators of neoclassical economics. It is because trial-and-error processes of interactive learning converge on the equilibria of the game

Brochure for ELSE (Centre for Economic Learning and Social Evolution)

You may have seen the red and green labels on trees, and you may even have read some of the poems on them. As artist in residence until the end of May, I'm exploring art-making in relationship to the trees in the grounds. But I'm also interested in knowing how you feel about the trees on campus. I am putting labels on the trees one more time this week and to quote one of the poems on them, "The tree which moves some to tears of joy is in the eyes of others a green thing that stands in the way."

So what are the trees for you? How and when do you see them?

I'm going to be around asking you, especially next term.

In the meantime, the grass area near the Art Barn is my nursery for ideas, where I am experimenting, making hurdles and low barriers. I want to use such structures, in the University grounds, to temporarily draw attention to the trees. Keep an eye out for these towards the middle of May and tell me if they make you look differently. You can find me near the Arts Barn on Fridays or maybe I'll find you in the grounds when it gets warmer!

ELIZABETH ADELINE (Artist in Residence)
Bath Sponge (Univ of Bath student magazine)

The first study of car boot sales (by the Economic and Social Research Council) found that the cultural norms of the British Sunday have undergone a fundamental transition as shoppers seek out "quintessential post-modern consumption sites that synthesise leisure with consumption".

Daily Telegraph

Clarence, the lapsed man of the cloth, begets Teddy, who carries the mail and begets Esther, who changes her name, rises to glamour, and begets deranged Clark, whom the flames consume in expiation to a nonexistent but vengeful Moloch. Triste copulations alternate with even sadder fellations. History unfolds richly in the background.

GEORGE STEINER
(reviewing John Updike novel in New Yorker)

Taking its name from the female figure atop the Law Courts, "Body of a Blind Woman" (by David Evans) explores the space and symbolism of the labyrinthine gap circumscribing the Inns of Court. Arranged around the Inns, the article unfolds four sites of imaginative inquiry one from another. Each draws on sources in the philosophy of the imagination, anthropology, and theology to illuminate a symbolic map of the Inns — the invisible 'interiority' of the Law. Analogous to the scene of a myth, a condition of the ground is deciphered beneath the ground of law, which is simultaneously embodied in and symbolised by the gap. This *topos* becomes the scene of an architectural invention produced through the text as its site.

DAVID EVANS & JILL ALLIBONE
The Inns of Court (essays)

CONTRIBUTORS: A. Non, M. Horscroft, C. Cotterill, R. Hickenton, A. Steiner (no relation), R. Hooberman.

£10 paid for entries

TV

This Life (BBC2)
Barrymore (ITV)

THE only channel without a weekly soap opera to call its own is BBC2. This Life — a show about five young lawyers sharing a London flat, a rip-off of the American series *Friends* — is pencilled in at the moment for 11 weeks but there are obvious hopes it might be a 52 or a 104 by 1997.

This Life is about young people, so there is lots of sex. There was a blow-job in each of the first two episodes, the first of them complete with a scene in which the girl cleaned her teeth afterwards. In episode two, there was a discussion about how messy and slimy condoms are.

There are boys and girls in *This Life*. The girls are obsessed with sex. They say things like: "I don't need a boyfriend, I need a fuck." When a boy says to a girl "I don't think I know you", the girl replies: "Yes you do. We've had sex!" The girls' obsession with sex is supposed to show that they are young, liberated, 90s women.

Scriptwriter Amy Jenkins has carefully differentiated the male characters from the female ones. They're not obsessed with sex, but then it might be argued that they don't need to be as the can barely open a door of the flat without a woman demonstrating her sexual liberation by giving them a blow-job.

No. The boys are obsessed with football — except, of course, the gay character. You get the sense, though, that Jenkins has just flicked through *Fever Pitch* a bit. One boy is shown in front of his bedroom mirror chanting; "Lee Sharp! Lee Sharp! Cantona!" Later, at breakfast, he says: "Christ, I'm still gutted about Incey!" Later still he tells his girlfriend: "I know how you feel about the job. It's like how I felt about Incey."

The rest of the script consists of limping attempts at zeitgeist surfing — "Anna, this is the Nineties!" — and failed epigrams: "Only the old can afford to be young!" It looks ever so smart, though, with swanky black screens between the brief scenes like an American drama. If Jenkins could come up with a sexual practice other than the blow-job and extend her male dialogue a bit further into the Manchester United squad, *This Life* might just have legs.

Another show with a prominent gay character — though it didn't really want one — is LWT's **Barrymore**. Since revealing that he is not as other presenters, TV's highest paid frontman has been losing viewers like Delia's Bacon Recipes on Israeli TV and has had his main vehicle, *Barrymore*, pulled back out of peak-time. His other vehicle is also a write-off: *My Kind of People* is almost certain to be cancelled.

The conventional wisdom in showbiz, particularly among many ageing men who have just never met the right girl, is that the viewers are worried about where he's been. Extra padlocks are being put on closets all over Tellyland.

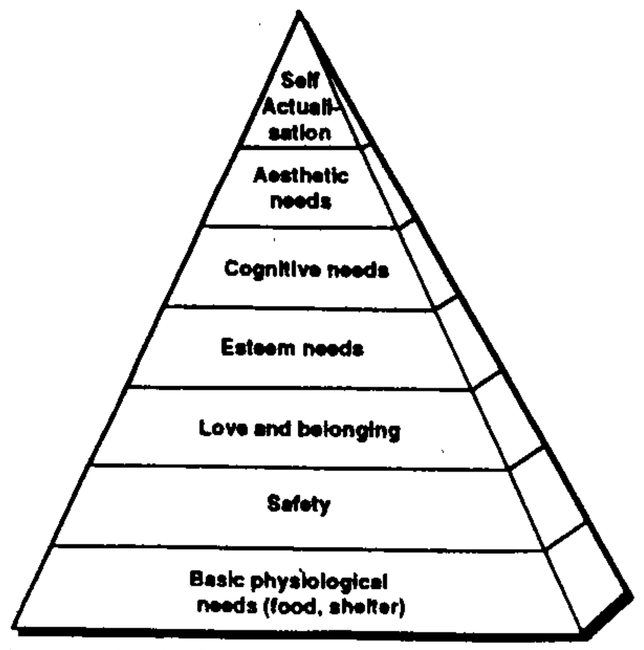
But a close inspection of his recent shows suggests that the problem may not be what the star does after work but what he is doing at work. Last weekend's edition of *Barrymore* — a pro-am variety show — featured a dismaying array of wannabe talent, including a tiny tot who had overcome brain illness, a bald club crooner and someone described as a "gas-fitter impressionist". Poor sod. It's been much harder to do impressions of gas-fitters since the companies made the real ones carry those little cards. The main pro was Joan Regan, an ancient lounge singer who had released a comeback CD after a brain haemorrhage.

In fact the ability to sing after serious cerebral trauma seemed to be a sub-theme of the show. The terrible thought emerged that the star's management (Mrs C. Barrymore) is trying to win sympathy for him by showing him being nice to heroic folk: a kind of Oprah-with-songs. If so, it isn't working: Barrymore obviously has little time for the guests and even less for his research notes.

Joan Regan began her interview by telling him that she had just done a number different from the one he had mistakenly announced. He addressed Les the gas-fitter impressionist as Lee. So the difficulty isn't that the star is in Heaven at night; it's that he's so clearly in Hell earlier in the evenings.

'Square Eyes'

HOW TELEVISION WORKS Pt 94



Abraham Maslow's theory of human behaviour contends that human behaviour is motivated by a hierarchical series of needs beginning with the basic physiological needs of food and shelter

CAN'T decide between a PC, an interactive CD-i or a new set of heated curlers? The BBC's "Setting Priorities in Technology Spend — the 'Technology Hierarchy' Approach" is for you.

As the 140-page *Implementing the Efficiency Vision* document says: "By adapting [Abraham] Maslow's 'hierarchy of human needs' to 'technology needs' we have a framework that could help the BBC to set priorities..." Etc, etc. Er, what's on ITV?

10.15 A TRIBUTE TO GEORGE BURNS (T)
Terry Wogan interviews the comic actor who died recently. 925328
Mail On Sunday

CARLTON Television has been crowing about its latest series which has former SAS members speaking openly about their time in action. The *Boy's Own* format reconstructs famous SAS missions like the storming of the Iranian embassy in 1980.

Part of the reason for Carlton's public chest-beating over the series, *SAS — The Soldier's Stories*, is because factual programmes should please the ITV regulators: they make a change from pisspoor game shows and sitcoms. But one aspect of the series that has been given no publicity is the battle behind the scenes between Carlton and the tiny independent company, Arlott Television, who first brought the idea to Carlton.

Arlott's producers were thrilled to hand over their idea and Carlton was equally delighted to take it, admitting to the independents that it had wanted to do a similar series for a long time but had not had the contacts in the SAS which Arlott could provide.

Now Carlton has abruptly accused Arlott of breaking its contract and has refused to pay its producer's fee or give any credit. This also means Arlott will lose lucrative ancillary rights to videos, games and other spin-offs from the series. The bemused and out-of-pocket independents have been left with no option but to sue, which they can barely afford to do.

THE V-CHIP MEANS THAT IF ANYTHING NASTY..
AND REPELLENT...
THAT PUSHES YOU BEYOND YOUR TOLERANCE LEVEL...
APPEARS ON YOUR SCREEN...
IT SCRAMBLES IT!

NO SOUR grapes from Dr Lisa Jardine, the highbrow academic who was unceremoniously dumped from Radio 3's *Night Waves* along with two other heavyweights. She wrote a luvvie note to "All at Arts and Features" which gushed: "I've loved working with you all!"

She had less charming words, however, for her former employers, who, she told any hack who would listen, had a distinct lack of direction. In one diary column she even hinted that arts editor John Boundy was not quite up to the task of providing for Radio 3's cerebral listeners.

Despite these harsh words, Jardine's publisher unashamedly sent a copy of her new book to Radio 3's *Kaleidoscope*, suggesting the programme give the book publicity and even invite Jardine on as a guest. This unabashed approach, after Jardine's tirade against Radio 3, will surely be frowned upon by *Kaleidoscope*'s editor — one John Boundy.

"Cube root of 50,653 – thirty-seven"

IN a confidential report to Mirror Group superiors, L!VE TV boss Kelvin MacKenzie brushes aside his channel's £689,000 losses in February to concentrate on his ideas for exciting new programmes on the pisspoor cable channel.

From the man who gave cable viewers *Topless Darts* comes a fresh idea aimed at female viewers: *Lunchbox Volleyball*. As the ex-editor of the *Sun* puts it: "Teams of fantastically fit, good-looking muscular men wearing clinging lycra shorts in either tiger or zebra designs battle it out on the glistening sand."

Other brainwaves include a Norwegian weather presenter "to deliver the weather in her native tongue" and dressed in "spectacular evening gowns". For weekend weather bulletins tests are already underway "with a bikini model from Holland and a jumping dwarf on a trampoline".

Nor has Kelvin forgotten his brilliant creation, News Bunny. News Bunny is apparently standing in the Staffordshire by-election, so L!VE viewers can look forward to sophisticated, presidential-style debates between the candidates and the, er, rabbit.

ALEXANDRA Henderson, editor of live programmes at BBC Westminster and daughter of Sir Nicholas Henderson, former ambassador to Washington, has not inherited her father's diplomatic skills.

Not long ago the NUJ branch at BBC Westminster passed a resolution condemning Alexandra's "bullying" tactics. Actually, Alex — better known in polite society as Lady Drogheda — is a terribly kind person. She even employed a young man called Anthony Gordon Lennox after he'd been turned down for a researcher's job by a BBC interview board.

She gave the lad a position as a broadcast hack — several notches above the job for which he had been officially rejected — which was a source of great pleasure to his dad, Lord Nicholas Gordon Lennox, a former ambassador to Madrid and a close chum of, er, Lady Drogheda and her dad, Sir Nico.

Who can forget how sweet Anthony looked as a page at Alex's wedding to the 12th earl! Sadly, Anthony's father Lord Nicholas is a governor of the BBC, so further progress up the ladder will probably be rather difficult.

CENSORSHIP

AMONG national newspapers only the *Independent* has shown the slightest interest in the huge child abuse scandal which is now unfolding in north Wales.

The scandal has been exposed in a report commissioned two years ago by Clwyd county council from a panel of three headed by John Jillings, former social services director of Derbyshire. The other two members were Jane Tunstill, a professor at Keele University; and Gerrilyn Smith, an expert on child abuse from Great Ormond Street hospital.

One curious feature of the inquiry was the failure of several senior officials of the county council and even the north Wales police to give evidence to it.

Nevertheless, Jillings and his colleagues have come up with some startling conclusions. "Our investigations," says the report (para 30.1.), "lead us to conclude that the abuse of children and young people in Clwyd residential units has been extensive and has taken place over a substantial number of years."

Para 30.3 says: "It is clear that in a significant number of cases the lives of young people have been severely disrupted and disturbed. At least 12 young people are dead."

What was done about it? Para 30.20 tells us. "Our findings show that time and again the response to indications that children may have been abused has been too little and too late. Furthermore the needs and interests of children and young people have tended to be an incidental rather than a primary concern. Our criticisms in this regard apply not only to Clwyd County Council, but also to the Welsh Office, the North Wales police and constituent agencies in so far as we have been able to examine their contribution to our investigation."

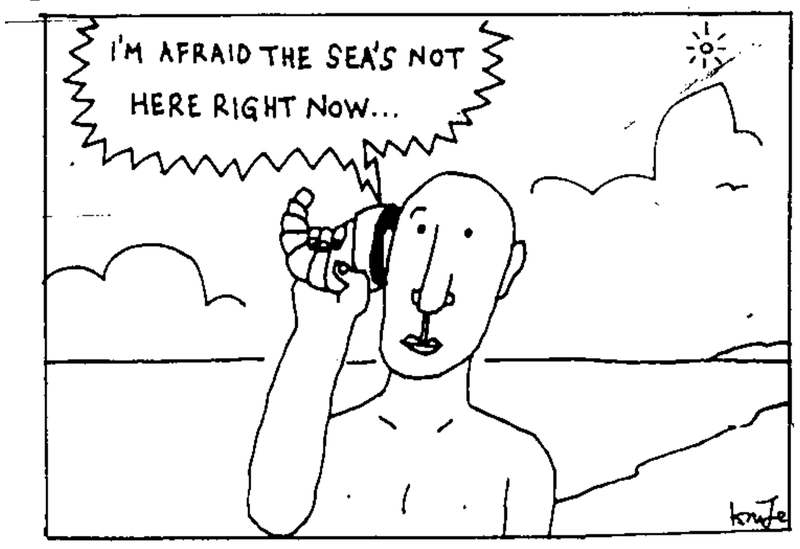
Para 30.21 goes even further: "An overarching finding is that where there has been a conflict of interest between safeguarding professional position and the safety of children and young people, the interests of children have almost invariably been sacrificed." The report notes 10 separate secret inquiries by the council into abuse at children's homes, none of them linked and none of them properly acted on. Most councillors had not the faintest idea about most of these inquiries and their outcomes.

This is by far the worst official report on child abuse in Britain. Yet the council which commissioned it is not going to publish it. Nor is the Welsh Office, which has put its five copies under close lock and key. Nor are the police who also have at least one copy.

The county council, for its part, is terrified by the advice of the lawyers of its insurance company, formerly Municipal Mutual, now Zurich Municipal. Tom Huggon, a lawyer for Municipal, has told councillors that if they publish their own report they will be liable to claims from abused young people in the homes; and that if the county council defies this advice and publishes, the insurers will not meet any claims. For good measure, the lawyers have also advised that in certain circumstances publication of parts of the report might be in breach of our old friend "public immunity".

The extent of the cover-up gives some force to the persistent rumours circulating in north Wales for years that children from the homes were "supplied" to important people all over the area.

This is a major scandal and the report should be published in full at once.



WATERWORLD

AS John Major admits that he got it wrong on water privatisation and attempts to create spurious competition between the giant monopolies, the *Eye* suggests he looks at the following companies.

Hyder, the new name for the amalgamated electricity and water companies in Wales, has appointed a new finance director: Gerwyn Miles, who is no stranger to **South Wales Electricity (SWALEC)**.

Four years ago he applied for a job there but did not impress the interviewers, one of whom was SWALEC's chief accountant, Tony Wilson. By strange coincidence Wilson is now one of the "SWALEC Nine" singled out for redundancy after the takeover.

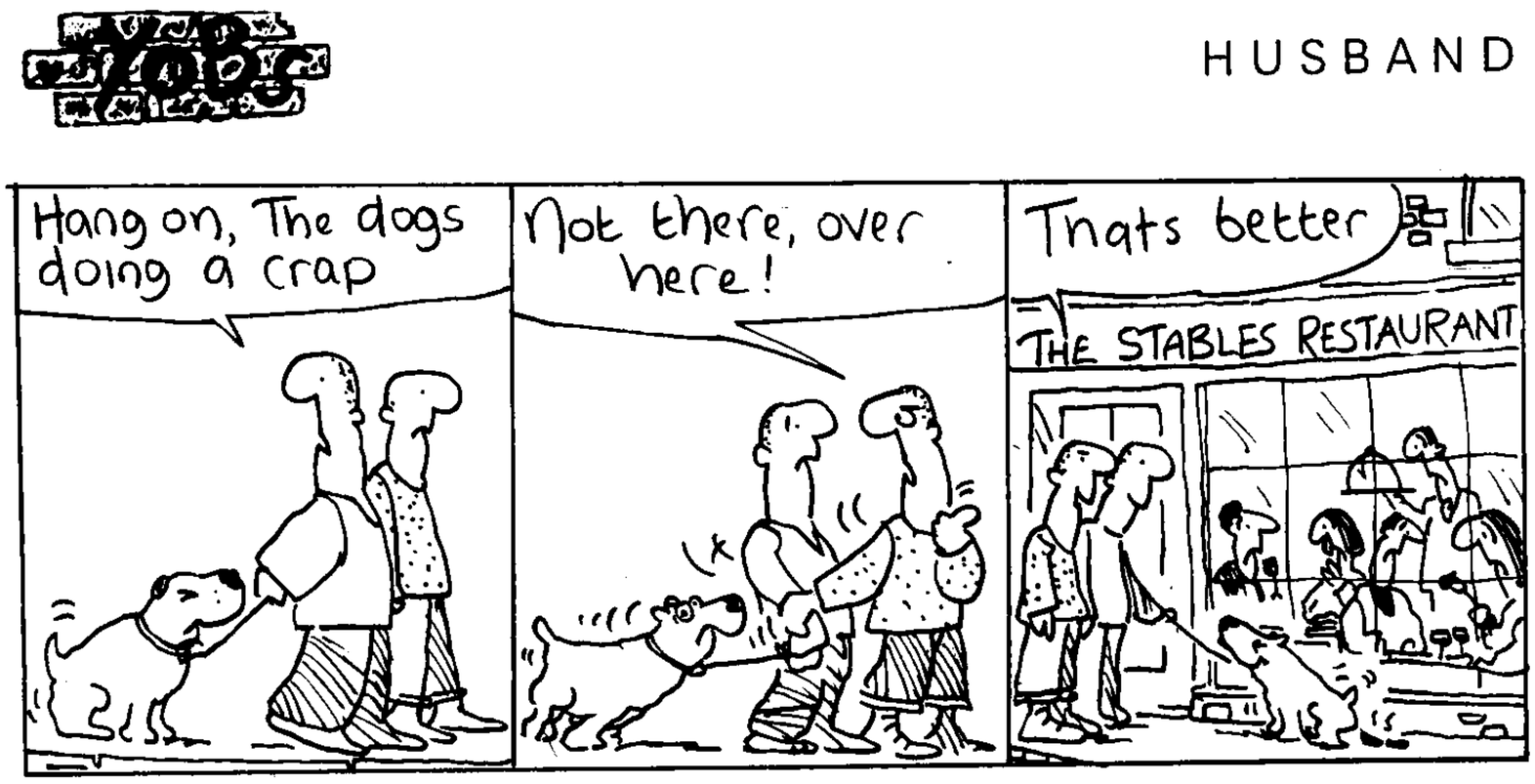
Another of the redundant workers has not been shunned completely by the cunning new company, however. He is Huw Roberts, SWALEC's director of public affairs, who is a Labour party insider and so could be useful to the water men after a general election. He has been offered a year's "consultancy" work.

● THE mayor of Grenoble, Alain Carignon, was jailed for accepting bribes from **Lyonnaise des Eaux**, the giant French water company. Lyonnaise's head, Jean Jacques Prompsy, had bribed Grenoble officials to win the city's water contract, was found guilty of fraudulently using corporate funds and was given a suspended sentence.

Now the new ruling group in the city has stripped Lyonnaise of the water contract and brought the water supply back under municipal control. This has brought an immediate drop in water charges. Recent French studies show this is not the exception to the rule. Water provided by the French private sector is 70 percent more expensive than supplies under municipal control.

PS: Lyonnaise owns **Northumbria Water, North East Water** and **Essex & Suffolk Water**, which has had the highest increase in domestic prices of any water company this year at 7 per cent.

● **Yorkshire Water**, with no intended irony, has sent out a bill to their customers with a special message on the front. It reads: "Not everyone can take water for granted. Help us to help WaterAid."



HUSBAND

DOWN ON THE FARM

NEVER in the field of human credulity has any one politician — not even the egregious Edwina Currie — been able to inflict so much damage with so few words than health secretary Stephen Dorrell in his lamentable statement on 20 March.

And, as the meat and dairy industries head for meltdown, there is no word in the English language to describe the cosmic incompetence of the ministry of agriculture, fisheries and food, aka the Maffia. At every stage of the unfolding drama it has made fundamental and irrecoverable mistakes: a litany of errors which has made this crisis as predictable as the fate of the players in a Greek tragedy.

Three errors stand out in the catalogue of blunders. The first was the Maffia's extraordinary delay in detecting BSE. In the West Country it is common knowledge that "mad cow disease" was present at epidemic levels long before it was "discovered" by Maffia vets in Kent in 1985. Further, there are persistent reports of BSE cattle appearing in Cumbria as early as the late 1970s.

In other words, while Maffia officials were fiddling with their white sticks, a nationwide BSE epidemic was taking shape and the cattle industry was already heading for disaster.

The significance of this is immense. Doom-mongers like Professor Richard "Mad Cow" Lacey rely on two crucial pieces of information to underwrite their doomsday scenario of millions of deaths. They rely on the BSE epidemic starting in 1986, and the latency period of Creutzfeltd Jacob Disease (CJD) being about 10 to 20 years. This makes this year the start of the human epidemic.

But, if the BSE epidemic actually started five years earlier — as it did — the CJD epidemic should have begun to take off around 1991. In fact the CJD figures have remained stubbornly normal, at levels very similar to those seen in BSE-free countries, and last year they actually fell.

Second in the litany of Maffia blunders was its failure to recognise that BSE had been endemic in cattle for perhaps a hundred years. Caught out in not seeing what was under its nose, the Maffia had to pretend that it was dealing with a new disease. And because it was "new", a new cause had to be found.

To do so, senior officials went to the only group with experience of encephalopathies: the ministry "scrapie" group. These diligent scientists immediately recognised an opportunity for unlimited funding. Without a single shred of evidence they came to the obvious — and lucrative — conclusion: BSE had been caused by feeding scrapie-infected sheep to cattle.

With this was launched the most pernicious myth of the scare — that there had been a "species" jump from sheep to cattle. Therein lay the playground of the pundits. The likes of Lacey, who had been totally wrong in his armageddon predictions on salmonella, and totally wrong again on listeria, exploited the growing illogicality in the Maffia's position. If the disease had jumped the species barrier once, he and others asked, what was to stop it doing it again, this time to the human population?

The third blunder coloured a series of events. From 1986 to 1989, when the scare took off for the first time, officials pretended that the epidemic was localised in the West Country and would soon die out. Once in the public domain, the Maffia chief vet, Keith "Victor" Meldrum, made a drastically wrong prediction that the epidemic would die down in a few years.

When it didn't, the Maffia's credibility, already fragile after its disastrous handling of the salmonella and eggs scare, was shot to pieces. It never recovered. From then on the Maffia was seen as covering up, and the more it and the ministers protested beef was safe, the more it was felt that BSE really could be passed from cow to man.

Even then, the precautions taken were largely sensible. In the absence of any evidence of risk, the banning of spinal cords, brains and other offals — the so-called specified bovine offals, or SBOs — was a wise move, and almost certainly has reduced an already minute risk to minuscule proportions.

Nevertheless the trigger of the current scare was the 10 new cases of CJD in persons under the age of 42, said to resemble the pattern of disease presented by BSE cows. This was sufficient to prompt the boffins of the Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee (SEAC) to venture that a review of causes had failed to explain these cases adequately.

Not least of their "scientific" considerations must have been that the unit researching CJD in Edinburgh was facing massive funding cuts and was planning major staff redundancies. Scaling down the BSE threat could do nothing but hasten the process. Thus the "scientific" conclusion was that the "most likely explanation", *at present*, for the CJD cases was exposure to BSE agent.

Translated, this "scientific" statement boiled down to little more than the committee, having no more idea than the man on the moon as to what caused the cases, felt that it might just be, possibly, er... BSE. For intellectual rigour, making the link on the evidence available was about as sound as arguing that, because it has four legs, a table must be a dog.

Delivered low key, Dorrell might just have got away with this meaningless statement. But that was to reckon without the *Mirror* stoking up the latent concern to fever pitch, followed in short order by a baying *Mail* and the rest of the scientifically illiterate media in full cry. It became open house for the lame, tired and discredited doom-mongers to bring out their dirty "Lacey" underwear and indulge in intellectual masturbation.

In this they have been ably abetted by Harriet Harman and "new" Labour, ever quick to exploit the fears of their largely urban electorate.

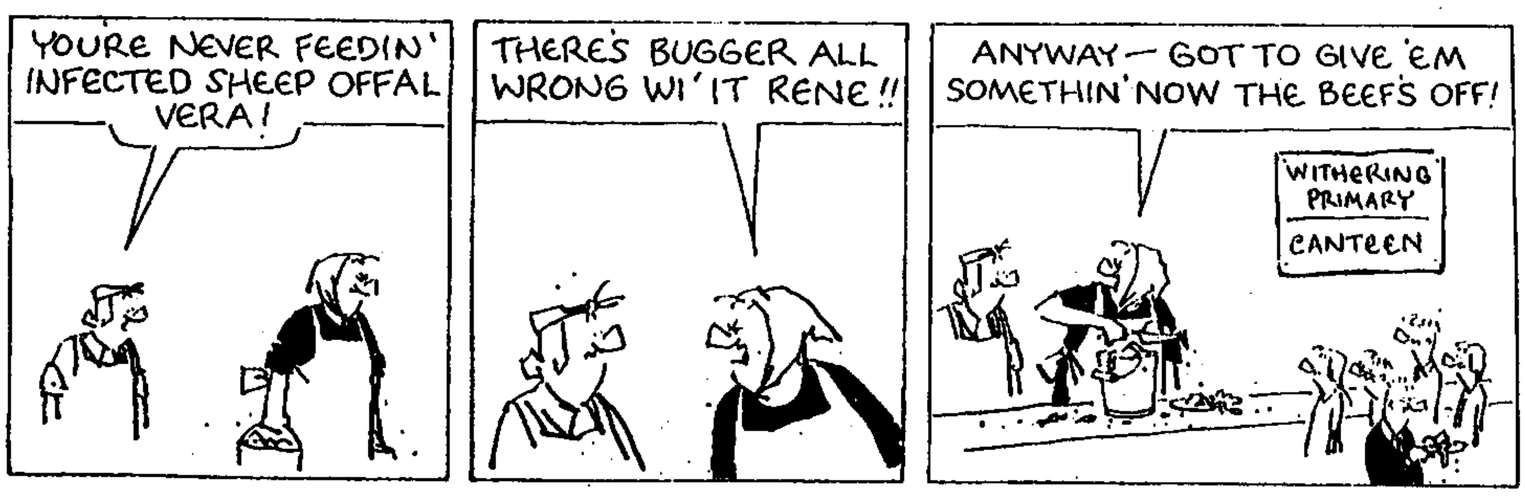
With the Lacey-Harman axis in full flow, the industry stands no chance. The market is in free-fall; farmers, market and abattoir owners and the many supporting trades face collapse. Hundreds of thousands of jobs and billions of pounds are at stake — yet insanity stalks the land. Predictably all we hear from the clever-dicks is the atavistic cry that has risen for a ritual sacrifice — the slaughter of up to 12 million animals, supported by the bleatings of the lame duck president of the National Farmers Union, Sir David Naish.

A mere eight years ago, another slaughter policy was launched which ended in the destruction of more than three million chickens, costing thousands of jobs and businesses. Clearly the gods were not assuaged as salmonella food-poisoning is now higher than ever. So, when the sacrificial pyres of the beef and dairy industries have died down, and the CJD epidemic has not materialised, what will be next?

'New Muckspreader'

Old Macdonald

ALBERT


YOURE NEVER FEEDIN' INFECTED SHEEP OFFAL VERA!
THERES BUGGER ALL WRONG WI' IT RENE!!
ANYWAY — GOT TO GIVE 'EM SOMETHIN' NOW THE BEEFS OFF!
WITHERING PRIMARY
CANTEEN

"You're in luck. Mother Teresa's in Calcutta has a spare bed"

DOING THE ROUNDS

THE much-publicised £450,000 illegal payments and other wrongdoings at Yorkshire regional health authority occurred despite accountability guidelines that came into force following managerial disasters in Wessex and the West Midlands (*Eyes passim*).

Indeed, the 53-page national audit office (NAO) report concluded that the series of financial irregularities and rule-breaches bear comparison with these previous scandals. So why did it take the district auditors five years to spot them and the NAO seven months to publish them?

The belated inquiry uncovered not just irregular relocation payments to doctors and golden handshakes to managers, but conflicts of interest in the award of contracts and the mishandling of loans and other deals.

Keith McLean, one of the four "senior, experienced and respected" managers implicated in the report, was Yorkshire RHA's financial director and regional manager from 1990 to 1994. Ironically, and perhaps lamentably, he was a key member of the NHS executive internal audit development group which aimed to tighten financial controls in the wake of Wessex and the West Midlands. The report concludes that McLean "failed to discharge his duty of care to the RHA and behaved in a manner unacceptable to a public servant".

The other three failures were Carole Tietjen, head of personnel 88-94 ("Unacceptable... imprudent and foolish"); David Martin, assistant regional manager 91-94 ("lack of judgement... significant breach of his duty of care"); and Len Wright, a career NHS accountant who joined Yorkshire from Wessex RHA in 92 ("an employee of integrity who did not always display independence of mind").

The report makes no mention, however, of the role of Sir Brian Askew, chair of the region from 1983 to 1994. As a former personnel director himself, Sir Brian might at least have been expected to spot the irregular staff payments. Of these, perhaps the most interesting are two totalling £30,000 (cash) which tempted McLean to join Yorkshire RHA in the first place.

The responsibility here lies with a Mr Andrew Foster, who was Yorkshire's regional general manager between 1987 and 1991. Mr Foster also unknowingly oversaw an irregular car leasing scheme and a £30 million clinical waste incineration programme that went without tender to Yorkshire Water on the advice of a consultancy subsidiary of, er, Yorkshire Water. However, Mr Foster escaped personal criticism in the NAO report. This is entirely proper and has nothing to do with the fact that he is now controller of the Audit Commission and thus the most powerful auditor in the UK.

M.D.

THE Rotten Borough Advertiser

Friday 5 April 1996

EYE TOLD YOU SO (1)

FOR 18 months the *Eye* has been hammering home the story of how Tory-run Westminster council knowingly moved council tenants, particularly homeless families, into asbestos-riddled tower blocks off the Harrow Road for political ends.

Westminster Tories have regularly complained about the coverage and asserted their innocence, but now the *Eye* has been vindicated. Ex-Cambridgeshire chief executive John Barratt's report into the scandal is one of the most damning indictments of a local authority ever written.

Barratt finds that:

- The decision to move the 100 families into Asbestos Towers was politically motivated. It was part of a policy of moving Labour voters into Labour wards and was done to prevent a supposedly leftwing community group from taking over the management of the estate.
- Councillors and officers repeatedly took risks with people's health. According to Barratt: "Senior officers were defending the indefensible."
- When they started moving in the families, in 1989, they had known of the risks for seven years.
- The council considered removing the asbestos but it cost too much.
- The council reneged on its legal duty to minimise the risk to workmen removing the dangerous materials.

What is really worrying Westminster councillors and officials now — other than the health of its residents, of course — is the financial mess they are in. If large sums are paid to those who later contract asbestos-related diseases, those who have been in charge of Westminster over the last 10 years will face hefty bills.

Such problems would normally be covered by insurance, but no firm will now touch Westminster. Commercial Union, the council's current insurer, wants out, and other firms like Municipal Zurich are keeping at bay. Then there is the law. Barratt's report has been handed to Inspector Knacker and there is much talk that prosecutions could follow.

Meanwhile pressure is mounting on Barry Legg, MP for Milton Keynes South-West, to resign. Legg chaired the Westminster council sub-committee that on 21 February 1989 voted to move homeless families into Asbestos Towers. If Legg does resign, John Major's slender majority will vanish. Of course Legg may wait until the general election so the issue is buried under other matters, but that could prove an even bigger public relations gaffe. And if this wasn't enough, another even more damning report into the council's so-called gerrymandering misdemeanours will be out soon!

SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

"Anyone who read yesterday's [Barratt] report would see it has utterly disproved the wild and monstrous allegations made by the Labour Party that homeless people were deliberately put at risk."

— Lady Porter, in a statement issued through her solicitors, 25 March.

"Despite the availability of the clearest advice to the contrary, those acting on behalf of a public body repeatedly took risks, for a variety of reasons, with the health of people who ought to have been entitled to assume that such risks were not being taken."

— The Barratt Report, 24 March.

IN BRIEF

CAMDEN: The Labour council has lent almost £1 million to a charity without proper permission to get one of its Labour councillors, Dave Horan, out of trouble. The charity is Holborn-based Migrant Training Company (MTC), a voluntary group which helps prepare predominantly Irish immigrants for work in London. It owes Camden half a million pounds. Under the companies act, if it had traded while insolvent, its directors — who include Horan — could be personally liable. The loan, which was never sanctioned by committee, meant Horan could "avoid the criminal offence of unlawful trading", Camden chief executive Steve Bundred has revealed in a secret memo.

PS: Last month councillors learnt that another MTC director, Gerry McLoughlin, was convicted of terrorist offences in 1981 and sentenced to six years for conspiracy to cause explosions. Nevertheless, while local council taxpayers suffered a 13.5 per cent rise, the Migrant Training Company got an £18,000 grant to help it repay its council loan.

STIRLING: Locals were upset when the Labour council decided to close two village schools, cut spending on overnight gritting of roads and reduce library hours. They were furious, however, when they learnt that, only hours after the decision, all the councillors bar one spent the night in a fashionable hotel for a course on... how best to run their budget. They also learnt that the hotel stay cost £1,000; that council tax would rise by 17 per cent; and that councillors had awarded themselves an average £90-a-week rise in allowances.

LEWISHAM: Police are investigating after a senior male councillor received poison pen letters accusing him of serious sexual misdemeanours. The letters, all posted into council pigeon holes to which the public has no access, have been fingerprinted and sent to graphology experts. The culprit, a female councillor, is now in the frame. Who said local government was boring?

EYE TOLD YOU SO (2)

YET another revealing report has damned one of London's rottenest boroughs, Tower Hamlets. Auditor Kash Pandya says it is at the centre of a million pound bribery racket involving Petticoat Lane market.

As has been revealed in the *Eye* over the last four years, this time it is the Liberal Democrats who are at fault. The report shows that former leading Liberal councillors, including one-time mayor Jeremy Shaw, were involved in illegally sub-letting stalls. Another former Liberal member, Betty "the bung" Wright, illegally obtained a pitch for herself with the full knowledge of the then ruling Liberal regime.

The Liberals were rumbled when other traders complained that Wright wasn't entitled to the stall, and the council reluctantly agreed to hold an independent inquiry, carried out two years ago by John Hendy QC. Highlights of the scandal include:

- Market profits dipping from £250,000 a year in the late 80s to a loss of £1.5 million by the start of the decade. To make ends meet the council upped the trader's rents by 15 per cent and then 35 per cent. They wanted to go even higher until the courts stopped them.
- The council earmarked £122,000 for new mobile toilets which cost just £15,000. Where did the rest of the money go? No one is saying... and the lavs never appeared.
- £90,000 supposedly being spent on cleaning up the Lane's loos... only no such work ever took place.
- £33,000 going on refurbishing a local swimming pool and laundry. In fact no money was spent on the buildings at all. This cash also disappeared without trace.
- £15,000 being spent on portable bins for the market... which no one ever saw.
- A systematic campaign of harassment being waged against an innocent smallholder, Terry Smith, who had the temerity to try to trade legally where ex-Coun Wright had been trading illegally. Council officers tried to ban him from the market by claiming he was neglecting his stall. He had in fact tried to go to the toilet — except that he couldn't find any, as the ones the council had promised never materialised.

But what happens now? The auditor has stopped short of surcharging the guilty parties, so once again the poor East End taxpayers will have to cough up.

OUTWARD BOUNDS?

LIVERPOOL city council has done it again — setting the highest council tax in the country and sending the rate for band D payers through the £1,000 barrier.

Around 24,000 council workers are expected to take a 2 percent pay cut to lessen the shortfall in the year's budget. They, together with the council taxpayers, wonder what became of chief executive Peter Bounds's promise — made on his appointment in 1992 — that there would be no more cash crises.

Another intriguing question is whether or not the pay cuts will apply to the top ten "fat cat" officers who have enjoyed pay rises above the rate of inflation. In Bounds' case his salary has risen to £116,447 this year. His colleague, education director Frank Cogley, has had a 7 percent rise to £74,123, despite his department's substantial contribution to the overspend. Both Bounds and Cogley have also enjoyed cheap home loans from the council: of £125,000 and £200,000 respectively.

In November last year councillors promised to "get tough" with Bounds and his cronies by threatening them with the sack. They were not amused to find that an expected surplus of £11 million was going to turn into a massive deficit. Deputy leader Frank Prendergast said that if Bounds "does a wishy-washy job, then we'll bring in consultants". Consultants were brought in — cost: £4,000 a day — but Bounds remained in his post.

John Birt, the BBC Director-General, rejected suggestions of innacuracy.

The Times

RED FACE OF THE WEEK

SHEPWAY council's £13 million beach refurbishment using shingle dredged from the seabed is complete: there is a spiffing new stretch of seaside 10 yards deep and five miles long between Folkestone and Hythe.

Unfortunately, drainage is so improved the coast road between Hythe and Sandgate is subsiding alarmingly and will soon fall into the sea if nothing is done. Something will be done — but not until this summer when the area is full of tourists and the work can cause the biggest nuisance to the most people..

SUPERMODELS

KERBER

Letters

Sinking fund

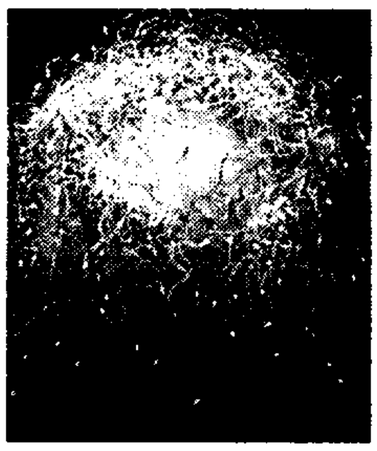
Sir,

Strange that we should get a new beef scare in the same week that "New Muckspreader" tells us BSE research funds may be under threat (EYE *894), don'tcha think?*

I wonder if the two could by chance be related? Perhaps he could tell us.

Yours faithfully,
CYRIL MALYAN,
London SW16.

Lookalike



King

Egg

Sir,

Has anyone noticed the startling resemblance between Don King, the boxing promoter, and a human egg being fertilised?

Surely they cannot be related? I think we should be told.

Yours faithfully,
D. BAKER,
Colchester.

Mass market

Sir,

Baroness Thatcher recently made a speech at Westminster College, Missouri, in which she warned that the west was in grave danger due to the acquisition of weapons of mass destruction by "megalomaniacs and strongmen of proven inhumanity". She continued: "If America and its allies cannot deal with the problem directly by preemptive military means, they must at least diminish the incentive for the Saddams and Gaddafis to acquire the weapons in the first place."

Is she in any way related to the Mrs Thatcher who was the British prime minister in the 1980s, when the British government was falling over itself to sell military equipment to Iraq, while offering it the incentive of export credit guarantees?

Yours faithfully,
KEVIN N.J. HENTY,
Qatar.

Mistreatment

Sir,

I have to say I am disappointed in your treatment of the issues surrounding the Dunblane tragedy.

I appreciate that your attack is concentrated on the media and political issues, and so they should be. But so soon?

Couldn't you have waited just a little longer?

Yours faithfully,
MIKE BIDGOOD,
Aberdeenshire.

Sorry tale

Sir,

Your ironic "letter" from the IRA on page 17 of EYE *894 was in the most appalling taste. Just because there is an ironic point to be made does not justify your being so moronic as to make it. You owe the people of Dunblane an apology for your callousness, but, no doubt, we will not receive it. I was about to send you my subscription renewal, but you will not now receive it.*

Yours faithfully,
P.G WHITEHEAD
(Ex-subscriber),
Doune, by Dunblane.

Bullet proof

Sir,

Please try to persuade Jonathan Aitken's lawyers to send you another letter. The two so far have been great fun.

Given Mr Sykes's vague understanding of what constitutes "arms" I suppose it is no surprise that when he points the tubey thing at his shoes and pulls the — you know, sort of lever thingy — that he ends up shooting himself in the foot.

Yours faithfully,
MARK ILIFF,
Caversham.

Club mascot

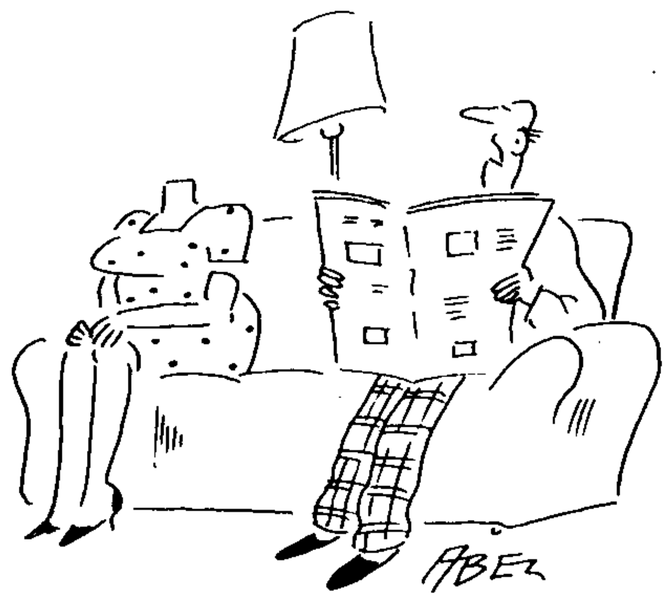
Sir,

Re: J.C.Q. Coaker's letter in your last issue (894). In November last year while visiting The Rand Club in Johannesburg I was surprised to see a gentleman reading Private Eye (the club is a regular subscriber).

I asked him if he enjoyed it and he said he did but asked me why in John Major's Diary his wife was referred to as "Norman". I explained the connection with the former chancellor Norma(n) Lamont, but he was not convinced. He also told me he thought very highly of Mr Major, comparing him favourably with Mrs Thatcher, although not in the ambiguous terms of his letter.

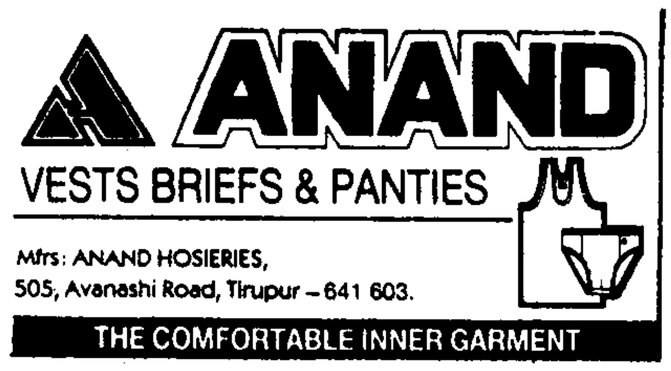
Could Mr Coaker be the man I accosted in The Rand Club library? I think we should be told. If he is, may I through your letters page ask him to write in and say so: we could possibly start a correspondence to rival that of the man in the vest!

Yours faithfully,
PETER COLES,
Market Harborough.



"Don't be stupid! Lots of women think they were Mary Queen of Scots in a previous life"

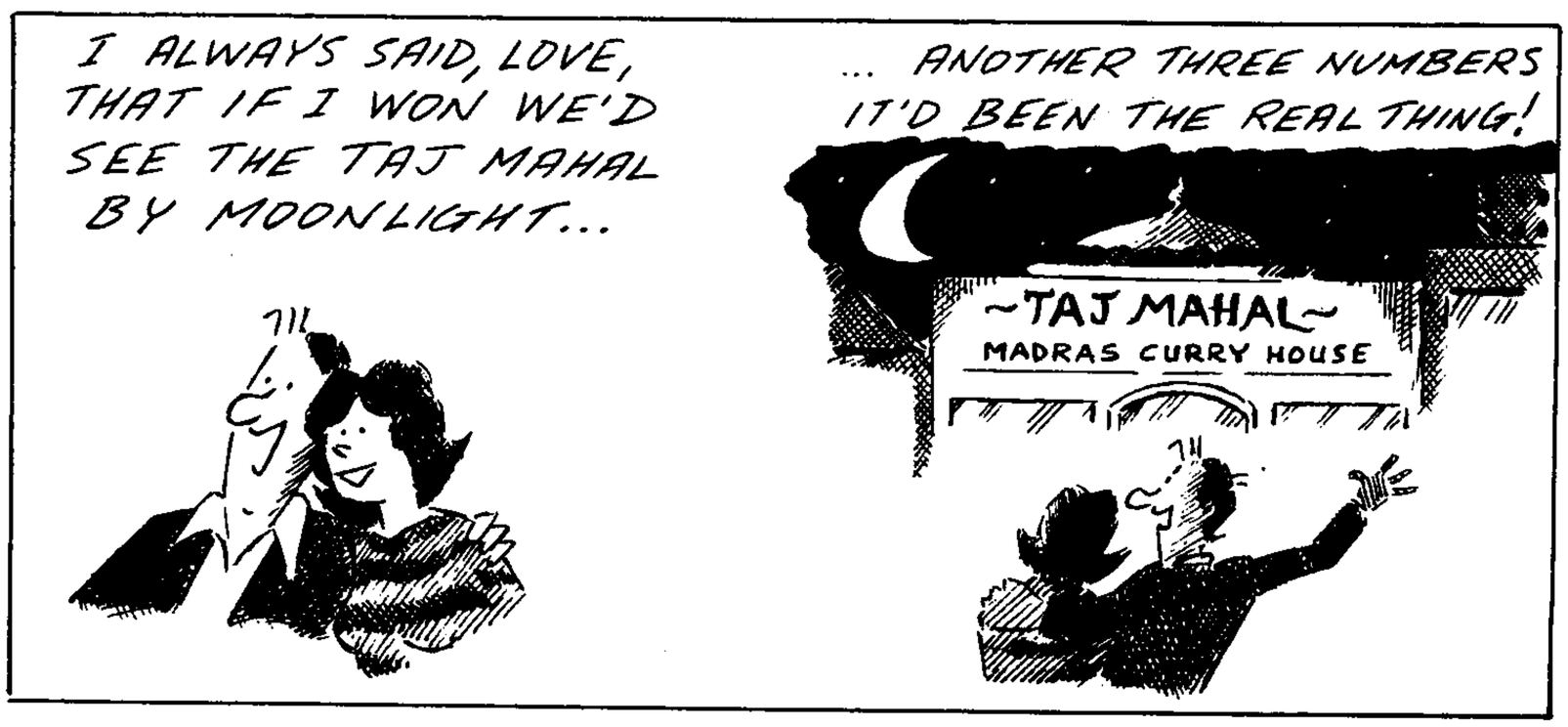
Mix and macho



Sir,

A friend who has just returned from your glorious country has brought along a picture of one of your leading intellectuals, Dr Andrew Neill, wearing a garment which is designed to increase the attraction of gentlemen of a certain age to younger persons of the fairer sex. As the enclosed advertisement, from THE HINDU, *Saturday 18 November 1995, demonstrates, the said garment can also remedy the male loss of hair, provided both top and bottom parts are worn. As Professor Neill does not seem to be aware of this particular feature, I wonder if you could pass on the relevant picture to him.*

Yours,
P.V. JAYALALITHA,
Chief Conductor, Madras Light Railway, 2nd Floor, Elevated Train Headquarters, Chepauk, Madras, India.


I ALWAYS SAID, LOVE, THAT IF I WON WE'D SEE THE TAJ MAHAL BY MOONLIGHT...
... ANOTHER THREE NUMBERS IT'D BEEN THE REAL THING!
~TAJ MAHAL~
MADRAS CURRY HOUSE

Klaus Wagner, a German doctor who has been trailing **Princess Diana** and declaring she should be queen, has been ordered held in a mental hospital for 28 days for assessment.

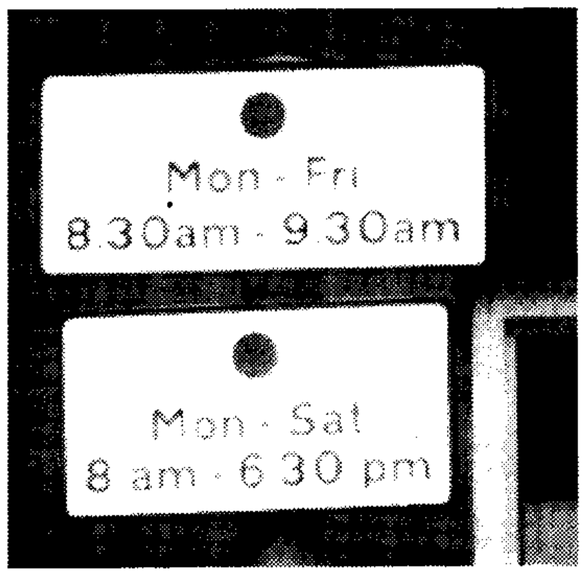
International Herald Tribune

Bang on!

Sir,

How many licences would the police issue to the Stoke Newington Afro-Caribbean Young Men's Automatic Rifle and Pistol-Shooting Club?

Yours faithfully,
S. OLDFIELD,
London W3.



Cheam

I-SPY **Submitted by Sam Porter** and **E. Goldring.** £10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs. No transparencies.)*

Cheese role

Sir,

I was a green undergraduate when first given the tour of the magnificent Sion College, and was rather startled to see laid out on the floor in the main library a chequered floor covering, on which were also various elaborate garments trimmed with ermine, a few candle-sticks, leather bound tomes, that sort of thing. Oh, and a jewel-handled dagger. Rather incongruous, I thought, a Lodge meeting in a theological library, but, well, the Church of England is a broad church. So why, I then thought, doesn't Sion College call in a few favours from the rolled-trouser brigade, use its networking facilities and fight to save this glorious institution?

Suggest it not in Gath that one may find even big cheeses of the Church of England among the hallowed brotherhood, those same cheeses who have embargoed reporting the state of play.

There are hundreds of rare books stacked on rows behind other rows of books, volumes and catalogues dating from the 17th century, and perhaps earlier. There is also in the basement a Tyndale Bible, and books kept in special stacks in controlled temperatures for their preservation. Should the books, rare or mundane, be scattered around the libraries of King's College, they will be lost to all.

Anyway, where else can one drink coffee and sit in a leather armchair reading the CHURCH TIMES, *the "ladies" not being altogether welcome at the Athenaeum?*

Yours faithfully,
S. A. H. ROBINSON,
London SW3.

Modest means

Sir,

Your references to the respective BOC roles of Dr Ann Eggington of the DTI and Mr Richard Giordano were inaccurate.

Dr Eggington's attachment to BOC has mainly involved sitting in as an observer at some senior management meetings of our UK gases business. She is not and has never been an employee or director of BOC Gases.

Dr Eggington came to us following a government initiative some years ago to help improve senior civil servants' understanding of industry. That programme is ongoing. She has received no remuneration from us other than modest travel and subsistence expenses associated with occasional attendance at meetings and site visits, in accordance with the ground rules established by her department.

Mr Giordano stepped down as chairman of the BOC Group in January.

Yours faithfully,
BOB PIRIE,
Communications Manager, BOC Gases.

Paul Foot replies: On 24 January, in answer to a question by Lord Avebury about directorships for civil servants, the Earl Howe, a government minister, listed 57 civil servants with "non-executive appointments within private sector companies" including Dr Eggington at "BOC UK Gases Ltd".

Getting stuffed

Sir,

The Rotten Borough Advertiser piece on the "missing £4.3 million" from Globe Town Neighbourhood in 1989/90 (EYE, *8 March) implies that local Liberal Democrat councillors were seen creeping from the town hall in the dead of night, carrying suitcases stuffed with fivers.*

To my amazement, not one of our former Globe Town councillors drives a Rolls Royce or is dripping with diamonds. If there was theft or incompetence on such a ridiculous scale, why haven't senior council officers spotted it and sorted it out in the last **seven years** *— are they totally useless, is it the conspiracy of the century, or is it all a cock-up?*

There is soaring bureaucracy and incompetence under Labour. It would hardly be the first time vital information has been lost since they recentralised the borough. As for your allegations about Lib Dem money transfers for "vote-winning schemes"... I'd love to know what they were! It sounds like you're suggesting some sort of gerrymandering. Or are you just making a smear without any evidence at all?

If Labour are sure of wrongdoing, how come they've given the story to the press but not to councillors? Is it because they know they're actually talking bollocks? While Labour just swan around the media, it has been left to me — the **opposition** *group leader — to write to the chief executive demanding a proper, open council investigation.*

Yours faithfully,
COUN JANET LUDLOW,
Leader, Tower Hamlet Liberal Democrat Group.

Baywatch

Sir,

Worth paying a few bob for a map of the world so you don't say things like "The Princess of Wales is holidaying on the Caribbean island of Barnuda, and Julia Carling is on the neighbouring island of Barbados" (EYE *894).*

It's like saying Diana is in London and Julia is in neighbouring Geneva. Not even spitting distance.

Yours faithfully,
KEITH SMITH,
London W11.

LETTER FROM THE ORKNEYS

ORKNEY Islands Council made a "wholehearted apology" to the four families whose children were taken from them after allegations of sexual abuse. But its payout of £40,000 per family does not even match the pay-off given to the Islands' social work director Paul Lee.

Lee was suspended after an inquiry gave a damning indictment of the way his social work department had handled the children's cases. He later resigned and accepted a payoff of £57,000.

The Orkney Islands Council ended its unqualified apology to the four families, which accompanied the compensation, by expressing the hope that the community and its social workers can live in harmony once again. But many of the social workers involved are still in place, and it is only a few weeks since a man on an outlying island complained to social workers about possible abuse of his child by a neighbour. Social workers acted promptly by sending a rambling letter — in which they threatened to take the *complainant's* children into care. He has now left Orkney.

Now the cases of the four Orkney families have been resolved, officers at Ayrshire council must be fearing that they will soon face claims from the families of the eight children whom they put into care. They were away from their families for an incredible five years before a sheriff ordered their return. If the compensation is worked out on the same basis as in Orkney, £2,000 per child for every week in care, the Ayrshire bill could mount to as much as £4 million.

In all the media excitement over the Orkney compensation many have forgotten the W family who remain uncompensated. Four of the older children have been returned from care but two of the children still remain away from their mother. She was recently informed, a week after everyone else, that both are soon to have their first adoption hearing.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"This is lap 54 — after that it's 55, 56, 57, 58..."
MURRAY WALKER, BBC
(Martyn Hayes)

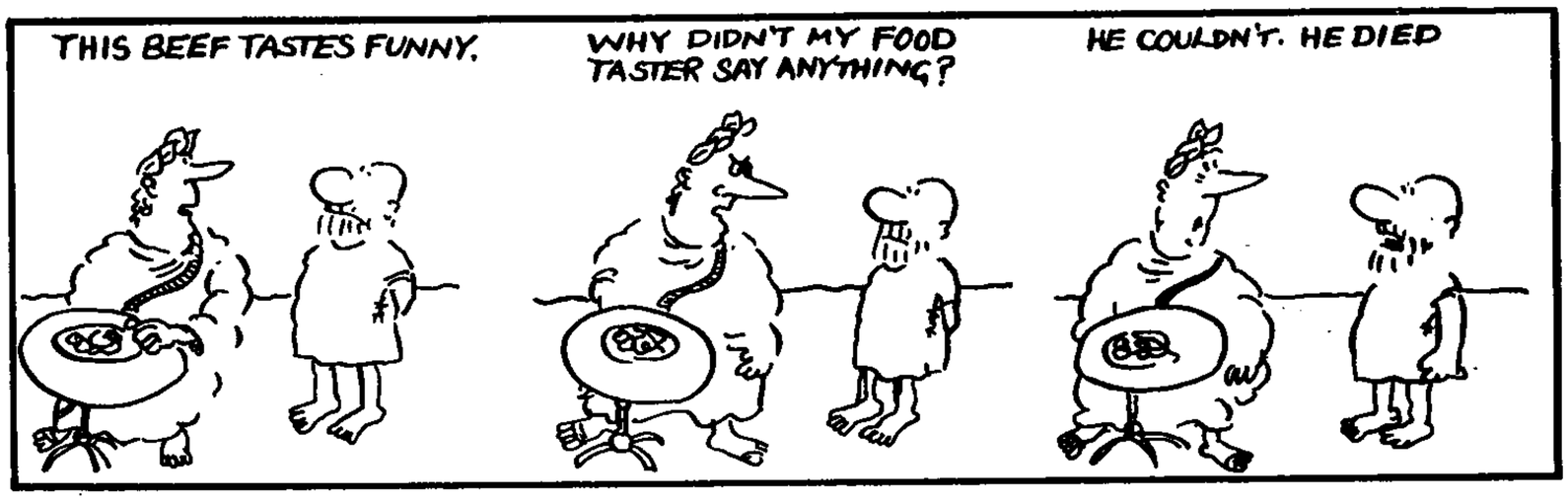
"Julian Dicks is everywhere. It's like they've got eleven Dicks on the field."
Metro Radio
(Andy Barrett)

"For most people, death comes at the end of their lives."
GLR
(Justin Robertson)

Zoe Ball: *So tell us what this is exactly...*
Guest: *It's a matchstick model of Cardiff Arms Park.*
Zoe Ball: *Wow! That's amazing. What's it made out of?*
Guest: *Er... matchsticks.*
Big Breakfast
(Andrew Dalmahoy)

HOM SAP

AUSTIN



FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY
Victor Lewis-Smith

"This revolting man took advantage of my client's patriotism," said Prosecutor Jeanette Morrish in the Melbourne Magistrates Court. "By posing as a government agent, he persuaded her to perform hundreds of sexual favours, solely because she believed she was helping national security."

Morrish then explained how Bernie Wagner had seduced the woman (referred to in court as Miss B). "Posing as a government official, he told her that the ASIO wanted to recruit her as a secret agent. My client loves her country deeply and, while she was bemused to be given a metal-coated plastic badge with 'secret agent' on it, she accepted the offer. Wagner, a very rich man, faxed her instructions, supposedly from five other ASIO officers, and initially assigned her only to surveillance duties, for which he paid her $1,200 a month. Then, after three months, she received faxed instructions, supposedly from a senior agent, assigning her to the task of curing Agent Wagner of a terminal illness 'through the most unorthodox method — orgasm'. At first, this only involved phone sex duties, but soon she was being instructed to fly interstate to Canberra to handle the problem personally. Travel documents were provided, along with a graph plotting arousal against medical benefit. Oral sex was specified to cure palsy and grief and she was paid a $200 allowance for sexy underwear. The scam only came to light after a year, when she received a fax that, despite her efforts, Agent Wagner had died. She went to the ASIO offices in Melbourne to offer her condolences, and discovered that she wasn't an agent at all, only a dupe."

Wagner was jailed for nine months for impersonating a Commonwealth official. Miss B, after a special request, was allowed to keep her badge. *(Melbourne Age, 7/3/96. Spotter — Steve Hudson)*

—o—

o *"When we arrived at Gorman's sex shop, we found that the main window had been smashed, and the shop had been looted," Police Sergeant Ollie Outrim told Palmerston District Court. "We saw two heavily-laden men trying to escape on bicycles, so we gave chase, along with several members of the public. The two men panicked as they fled, and started dropping their booty as they cycled. The items we collected from the street included several adult magazines, a blow-up woman, a female mannequin dressed in rubber underwear, a video called 'ficken nicht zwei titten', a box containing two gross of tubes of water-based lubricant, a leather tawse, a large drinking mug in the shape of a vagina, and an inflatable sheep. We eventually apprehended the accused, Patrick Neho, although his associate remains at liberty. We have not yet ascertained why a sex shop should be stocking blow-up sheep, especially since Palmerston North has a large sheep population."* (Eastern Express, 24/2/96 Spotter — Barbara O'Brian)

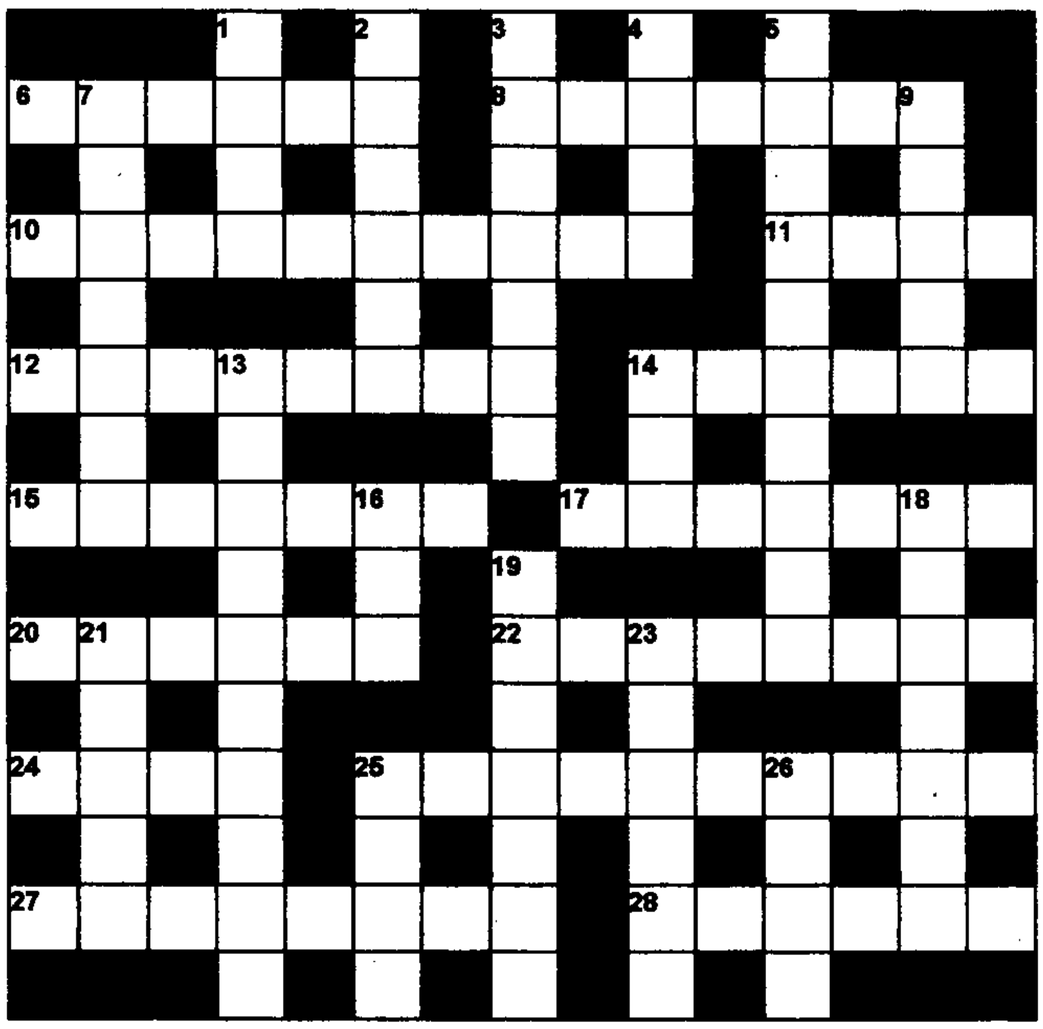
—o—

o "If there's one thing I can't stand it's dumb amateurs," Justice Sam Murphy told defendant Gerald Dixon in a hushed courtroom in Peterborough, Ontario. "I'm a professional, the police are professionals, and we expect to work with professional criminals, not bubble-headed imbeciles. You couldn't find your own butt with both hands."

Justice Murphy was passing sentence on Dixon, 26, who had earlier pleaded guilty to robbery, with his lawyer asking for leniency on grounds of gross stupidity. "My client is not a bright man. When he decided to rob the Whitby branch of the Bank of Montreal, it didn't occur to him that buying a balaclava from a clothing store on a hot day in July, and wearing it as he left the shop, would seem suspicious. A few minutes later, when the manager heard that a man in a balaclava had just stolen $2,600 from a nearby bank, he called the police, who identified Dixon from the store's security cameras. But the true extent of my client's stupidity was only revealed later that day, when he returned to the same bank and asked to open an account. They asked how much he'd like to deposit, and he said '$2,600 cash'. He was arrested immediately." *(Ontario Herald, 16/2/96. Spotter — Brendan Joseph O'Byrne)*

EYE CROSSWORD 50 by Cyclops

£100 Winner
Mrs JAMES S. CRICHTON



ACROSS

6 A sign the Church is involved in leak (6)
8 Visa transaction concealed by long time politician's typical response (7)
10/25ac The sleazy phenomenon of procuring 'riches from rags' stories? (6-4, 10)
11 Member's opening device (4)
12 Bishops against substituting male genitalia (8)
14 Kissinger pursued by very old monarch of ours (5,1)
15 Ex-cop puts shadow on Brenda (7)
17 Virginia's responsibility to promote health and efficiency firstly among prostitutes (3,4)
20 The old queen squeezing butt into skimpy underwear (6)
22 Not being the main attraction has bearing on how Di's ego started collapsing (8)
24 Ditch girl in a derogatory way (4)
25 (see 10)
27 The place for the outsider with awful flares and key ring (8)
28 Two modes of public transport are back for the willing sufferer (6)

DOWN

1 Key Conservative mates with hot queen, though union is forbidden here (4)
2 (see 21)
3 Be nit-picking: reschedule dole with employment (7)
4 Pisspoor columnist taking refuge in Murdoch acknowledgements? (4)
5 Being an aggressive manager, Kelvin is going round sacking indiscriminately (7,3)
7 The woman into fashionable sex is to be left (7)
9 Pole gets Yoko turned on for sex (5)
13 They willingly talk about lust — never love (10)
14 Princess Di for the time being shows resistance visiting hospitals (3)
16 In brief, moon-walking supposedly died with Hitler (3)
18 Marxist takes time to rubbish much-plugged broadcaster (7)
19 Bugger employment: raise cocaine inside for foreign money (7)
21/2 Tony, as Socialism's leader, real flustered — "Her Majesty's OK" (5,6)
23 Casual habit of Di's — getting involved with men (6)
25 Right's to engage in combat — there's nothing to be lost (4)
26 The House is pointless — what a surprise! (4)

£100 prize to first correct solution opened on 12.4.96. Entries to "Crossword", Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1V 5RG.

Solution to Crossword No. 49

ACROSS: 6/15a Shurely Shome Mishtake 7 Bastard 10 Sunset 11 Unknown 12 Harrods 13 Anorak 15 (see 6) 17 Ends up 18 Gunboat 21 Yeltsin 23 Gaffes 24 (see 8) 25 Boycott.

DOWN: 1 Thrush 2 Grass roots 3 Blotto 4 Backlash 5 Irangate 8/24 Two fingers 9 Mudslinging 14 Oval Office 15 Sunny Jim 16 Exposure 19 No good 20 Treaty 22 Leg.

DENIS BIOGRAPHY SHOCK

THOSE BOAT RACE CREWS IN FULL

Your In-Out Guide to Britain's greatest national sporting event

The Cambridge 1st National Bank of Chicago VIII
Hannibal Huckensucker *(Trinity and Amex)*
Ridley Wabosh Junior *(Jesus and General Motors)*
Graydon E. Arshole *(Emmanuel and Condé Nast)*
Wilson Willoughby Wilson III *(Magdalene and Hertz)*
John F Clintstone Junior III *(Trinity and Whitewater Real Estate Corp)*
A. Schwarzenegger *(Magdalene and Universal Studios)*
Michael Mouse *(Sydney Sussex and Disney Corp)*
Gripstone Van Blonk *(Peterhouse and the CIA)*
Cox: Dr Ruth *(Girton and NBC)*

Oxford
Tristram Weed *(Eton and Oriel)*
H. Montgomery Massingberd *(Eton and Christchurch)*
Pinky Pemberton *(Eton and Merton)*
Lord Wheen *(Harrow and Corpus Christi)*
Tarquin Follis *(Wellesley House and St Peters)*
Crispin Rye-Bredde *(St Cakes and University College)*
C.J.P. Wingfield-Digby *(St Cakes and Brasenose)*
The Rt Hon Derwent May *(The Twisk School and Keble)*
Cox: Anne O'Rexia *(Trinity College Dublin and St Hilda's)*

Great British Heroes No 94

Scott of the Magistrate's Court

IN 1995 Sir Nicholas Scott, the legendary drunk-driver, failed to reach his final destination — a parking space in Chelsea.

Scott, who foolishly planned to make the journey by car with only whisky to keep him going, was tragically stopped short of his goal when he was beaten to the space by a foreign toddler travelling by buggy.

His personal assistant, Miss Havia Oates, staggered out of the car with the immortal words: "I'm going out now to swear at the pedestrians. I may be some time."

Neither of them were seen again until they were eventually found by the police. But by then it was too late.

Scott was dead drunk.

Easter Message from the BBC

by St Joan of Arse (formerly Joan Fakewell)

St Joan: It is traditional at this time of year for the BBC to come up with a new programme suggesting that the central story of christianity is cobblers.

This year is no exception. I have been to Jerusalem and made the most amazing find.Imagine my surprise when in a small gift shop in tel Aviv Airport (called Relics 'R US) I spotted a complete set of caskets from the 1st century tomb of Jesus Christ's family.

When I saw the names, I could not believe my luck. They were all there. Jesus, Joseph, Mary, Matthew, Mark, Luke, Kevin and even Peregrine Worsthorne. These illuminated names shone at me across the centuries with an eerie resonance.

Could these caskets really contain the remains of the greatest spiritual leader of all time? If so they could overturn centuries of thought and belief throughout Christendom. Was there no resurrection?

"Take my word for it" said the shopkeeper. "These are totally authentic. I've got another set in the back. And we can do caskets with *your* name on it if you like. No, don't go away. 10 shekels the lot. All right 5."

It was shortly afterwards that I made the most amazing discovery of all. The BBC and the *Sunday Times* were willing to pay good money for this stuff! Surely that was the greatest miracle of all.

Coming soon in the *Sunday Times*

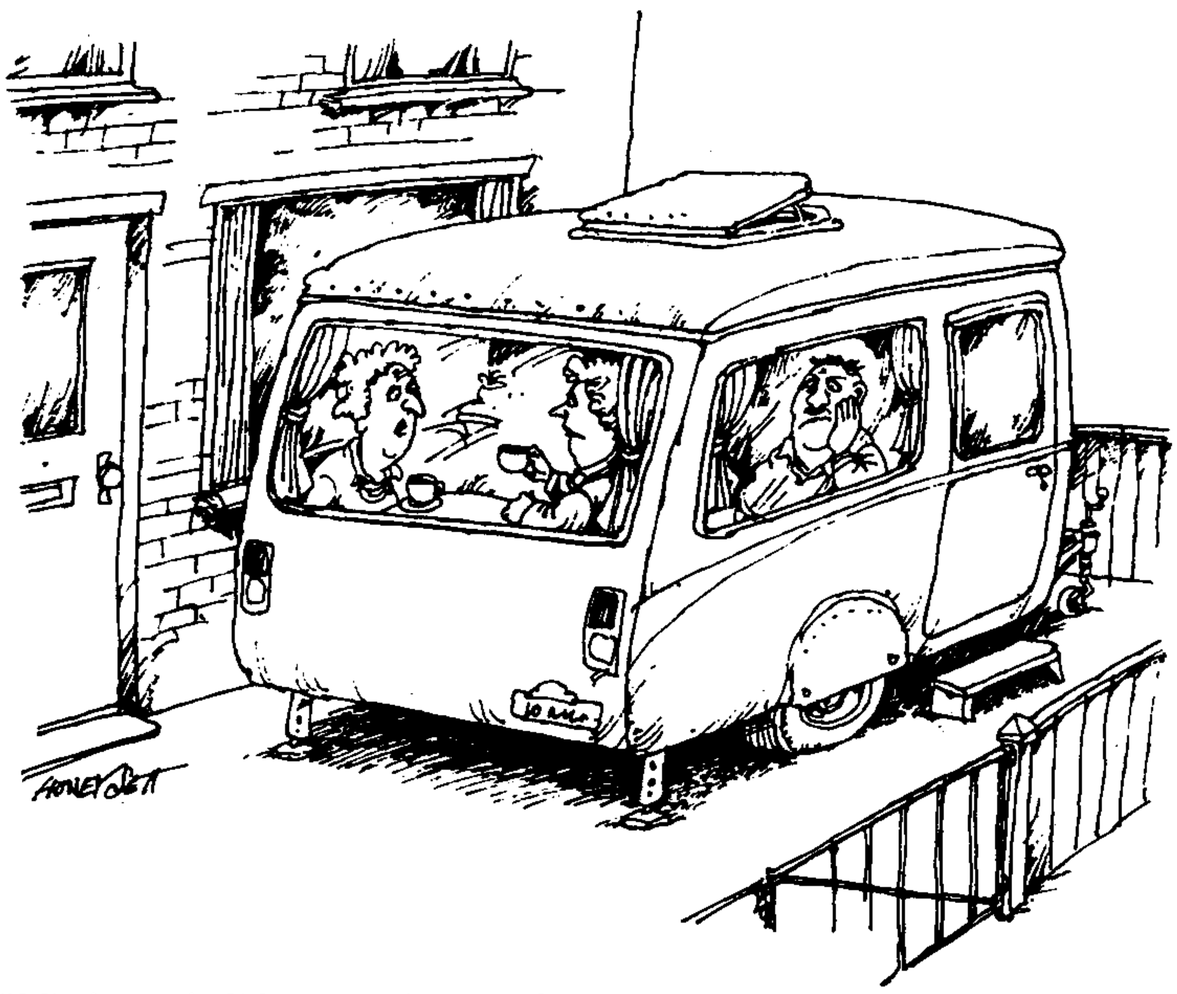
Jesus' Diaries *(as authenticated by Lord Dacre)...*
Eric Cantona is Christ's direct descendant...
Christ was KGB agent *by the Insight Team*

It's a Man's Life Sentence in the Army

It's brilliant. You get to travel to places like Cyprus. There's as much drink as you like and loads of free time to go out and have a punch-up with the Cyppos or the tourists or each other. What's great about the army is that if you've got no 'O' levels, you can drink ten pints of lager and you support Millwall or Man U, then you're in! And they look after you. The Brigadier's a great bloke and if you bottle someone in the face he'll still let you out in the evening so you can go and murder someone else. And all the legal costs are paid.

The Army — it's not just about killing people *(or it is, come to think of it)*

It's a Woman's Life in the Army



"Mind you, holidays aren't quite the same since he lost his driving licence"

IT'S NEW-LOOK FERGIE

(Reprinted from Hello)

IN A sensational series of photographs from the magazine *Hello*, the Duchess of York reveals a totally new image.

Gone is the tousled red hair, the freckled face, the chubby figure and the girl-next-door persona.

In its place we see the blonde bombshell, the sexy supermodel, the svelte seductress.

Says top fashion photographer, Kevin Le Yob: "People ask me how I achieve this stunning make-over. The answer is, of course, a professional secret but it is amazing what you van do with lighting, make-up and somebody else."

Poetry Corner

Lines Written On The Death Of John Snagge

So. Farewell then
John Snagge.

For 50 years you were
The voice
Of the Boat Race.

"I don't know who is
In front.
It's either Oxford
Or Cambridge."

That was your
Catchphrase.

Certainly it would have been
Hard to tell the difference
In 1949
When it was all in
Black and white.

E.J. Woddis (79¼)

WORLD OF THE ARTS

MAHLER ROW ROCKS NATION

by Our Musical Staff
Lunchtime O'Boos

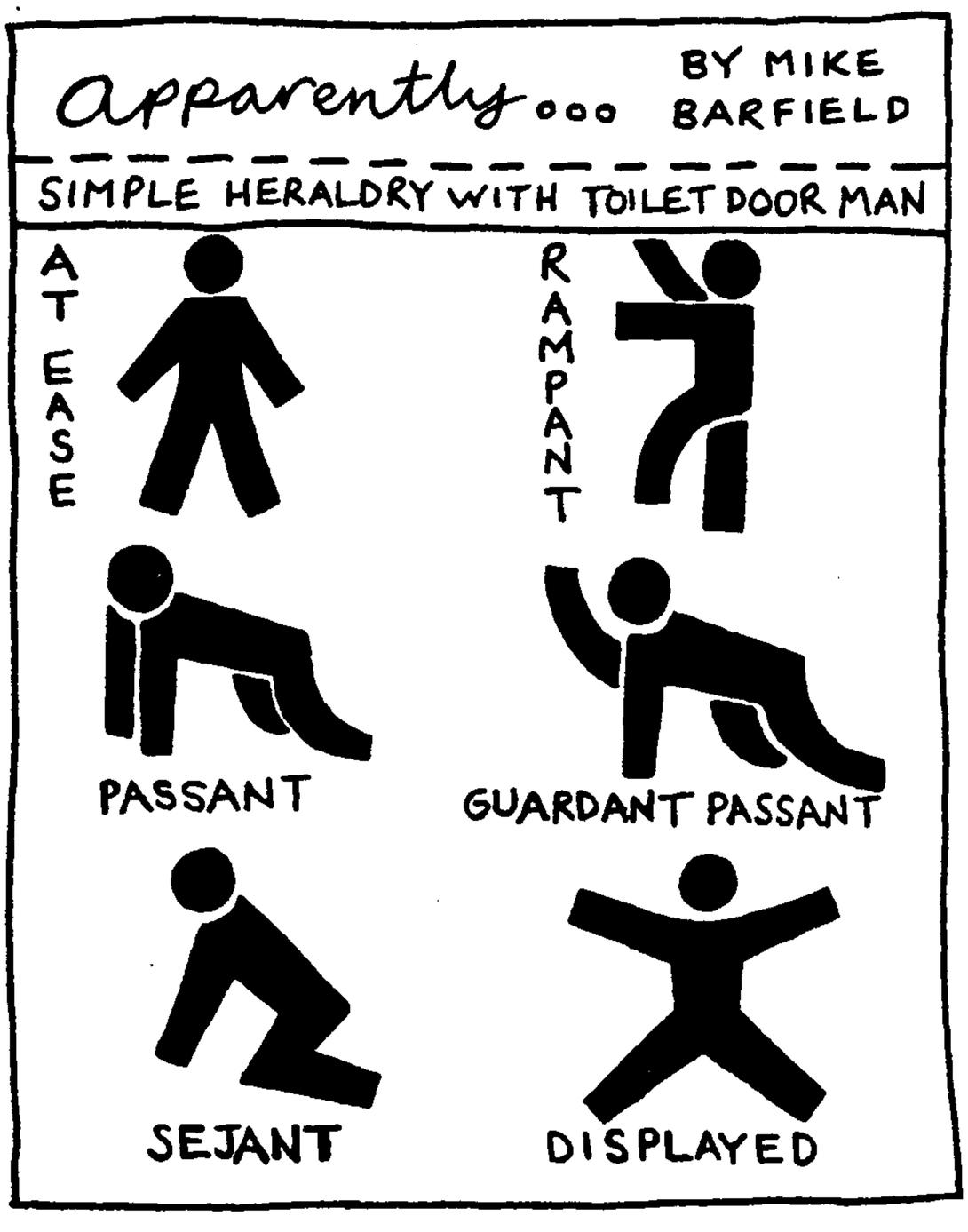
THE MUSICAL world is in an uproar over the decision by Deutschland Uber Grammophon to release a new disc, *Mahler's Greatest Hits*, reducing the great Viennese composer's symphonies to mere "two hour snippets".

"It is outrageous," said Dr Jonathan Mahler, a distant relative of himself. "In these philistine days, the public cannot concentrate on anything for more than 30 seconds.

"For instance, when I recently gave a four-hour lecture on that fat, overpaid gorilla Pavarotti, all people were interested in was the fact that I had called Pavarotti a fat, overpaid gorilla, which he is.

"Aren't people pathetic? Why can't they be as clever as me?"

Highlights from Dr Jonathan Mahler's Collected Lectures will be issued on 84 discs under the title "Jonathan Livingstone CR-Rom".



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- **Will Carling's gymnasium**
- **Johnny Bryant's swimming pool**
- **The Parker-Bowles country residence**
- **Highgrove**
- **Fergie's Southfork Ranch**
- **James Gilbey's car**

- **The offices of top divorce lawyers Mishcon de Reya**

And many more!

Hours of fun to be had looking at all the amazing varieties of Legover!!

LEGOVERLAND™

A WORLD OF DROPPED BRICKS

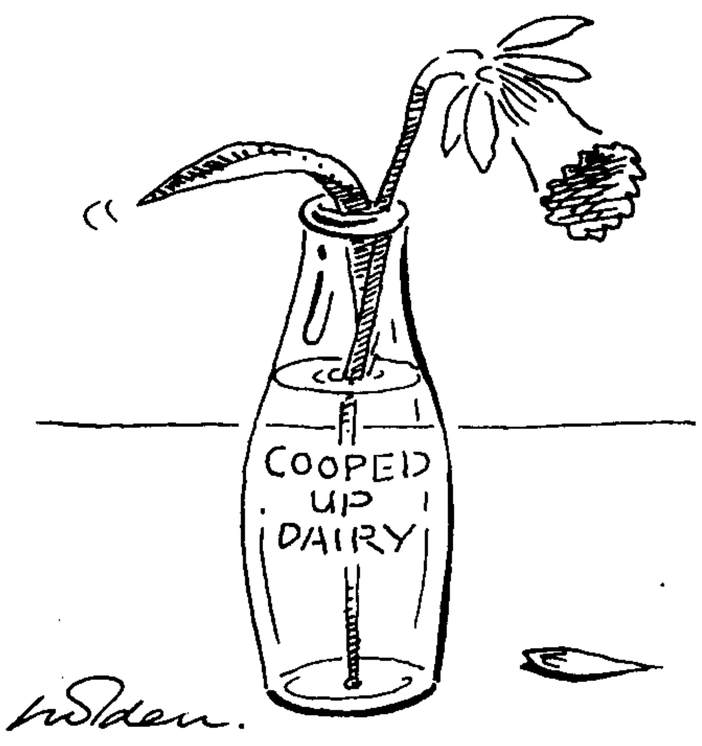
The Secret DAIRY OF JOHN MAJOR aged 47¾

Monday

Spring is here and the signs of our recovery are everywhere. Oh yes. We have weathered the Scott report and all the other reports. Labour's standing in the opinion polls is falling so fast that it has already been cut to only a humiliating 38 per cent. From now on it is plain sailing down the fast lane to the next election, and if Mr Blair thinks he is going to be prime minister he will have to wait until the cows come home.

Tuesday

My friend Mr Dorrell made a routine announcement in the House of Commons today about a disease called BSE and CJD. I did not understand all the technical details, but the gist of it is that, although they have a hunch that millions of people are going to die of eating beef, they haven't got any evidence for it. I found this very reassuring and congratulated him on handling a difficult situation very well.



Wednesday

Once again the media have got it all wrong. All the papers this morning had huge headlines about Mr Dorrell's purely routine announcement about millions of people dying because of beef, and demanding that my government should do something. I immediately took very firm and decisive action, as befits a true leader. I asked Mr Heseltine to call a Cabinet meeting so that they can tell me what to do. Mr Hogg said that if nothing was done hundreds of businesses would go bust and thousands of jobs would be lost. "So what?" I said. "There's nothing new about that. It has been part of my policy all along. It is what they call the Feelgood Factor." But Mr Hogg then said that the best thing to do was to kill every single cow in Britain, so that it would be safe to eat beef again, because there wouldn't be any. The only problem with this would be that it could cost £100 billion which as Mr Clarke pointed out would mean that we could not afford any tax cuts in order to win the next election. At this point everyone realised that this was a really serious crisis and that something would have to be done. But after several hours discussion no one could think of anything.

Thursday

The country has gone mad, but not from eating beef. This morning every page of every newspaper was about how we are all going to die because of this disease. The television is even worse and Mr Humphrys has been screaming for hours that something must be done. I even got a phone call from my brother Terry to ask whether it was safe for his wife Shirley to make him mince for tea, as that was what they always have on Thursday. "When are you going to give us a statement, John?" he asked. I realised that we must act soon, so I told Mr Dorrell to make another statement to calm everyone down, as his first statement had been so effective. He did so at once and told the Commons that there was absolutely nothing to worry about as the risk of millions of people dying was pretty small, although the scientists had no evidence one way or the other. At once Mrs Harman became completely hysterical, screaming and shouting and blaming me personally for not doing anything. "I *am* doing something," I said, quick as a flash. "I am blaming you and the Labour Party for this whole disaster. Not that it is a disaster, oh no. It is all under control."

Friday

I am not inconsiderably incandescent with no small measure of rage, according to the *Daily Telegraph*. Now the EU has decided to interfere in how they run our country by saying that Britain will not be allowed to sell any beef to anywhere in the world ever again. Mr Rifkind came in with a white face and said: "It's a blanket ban, prime minister." "This is intolerable!" I said. "First beef and now blankets."

Saturday

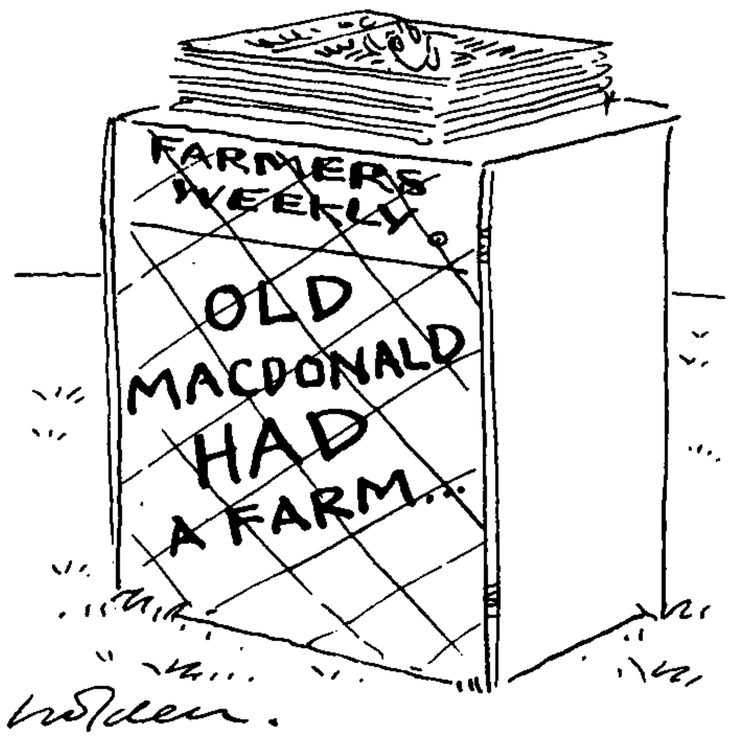
Fortunately I have a chance to tell all those Europeans exactly what I think of them, as today I had to fly to a place called Tureen, which is where they invented soup. Everyone was there, including Mr Herr Kohl, Mr Monsieur Chirac, Mr Sir Leon Brittan, Mr Herr Kinnock and all the others connected with Europe. I told them that beef would have to be top of the agenda, followed by fish. They agreed to this unconditionally, on condition that we did not discuss either beef or fish issues. After five hours discussing Herr Kohl's very interesting plans for a European superstate, we adjourned for lunch where the menu was as follows:

Greek Olives
Belgian Paté
Spanish Fish
French Beef
German Sausage
Dutch Cheese
Danish Pastries

"All British dishes have been removed from the menu for health reasons under Directive 96/421," said the waiter with a grin. "I am only obeying orders from Reichsfuerer Herr Kohl," he added in a whisper, raising his arm in a funny way just like Mr Cleese used to do in my wife Norman's favourite programme. Who said foreigners don't have a sense of humour?

Sunday

Mr Mawhinney tells me that Mr Blair is challenging me to a TV duel. "It will be just like Bruno and Tyson," I said. "It will be over in seconds." "Don't be so hard on yourself," said Mr Mawhinney. "You might last a bit longer than Frank."



As usual he had missed the point. I am not worried by Mr Blair, it is just that I am too busy to engage in publicity stunts of this sort.

"What are you doing then?" asked Mr Mawhinney, looking at my Ryman's diary which had a number of blank spaces between Monday and Friday for the next few months.

"Very well," I said. "I will go on television just to show who is boss."

"No, don't do that," he said. "Just go on."

My brother Terry rang me to give me some advice on being on television.

"Don't try and be too clever, John," he said. "Just be yourself."

HOUSE OF COMMONS
OFFICIAL REPORT

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

ZZZZZZ
HANSARD

3.15 A statement by the Secretary-of-State for Health designed to scare the pants off the whole country.

Mr Stephen Drivell (Feeble South, Con): It is my solemn duty to acquaint the House with the latest findings of the Scientific Advisory Committee on Food Scares. While the scientists have not a scrap of direct evidence to link CJD with BSE, they nevertheless believe there is a link. I will make a further statement next week as to whether it is safe to eat beef or whether you will all die from so doing.

Ms Harriet Harperson (Harridan, Lab): Murderer! Killer of toddlers! Arrest this man at once!

Mr Anthony Bovine (Marlow, Con): You silly cow.

Betty Beefroyd (Speaker): Order, order. It is totally out of order to call hon members cows, even if they are.

Mr Tony Blur (Oasis, Lab): Whilst it is my normal position to support the government on all issues, I just want to say that this is the most incompetent bungling half-baked dishonest totally incompetent bunglingly half-baked...

(Labour shouts of "Oh no, he's turning into Kinnock")

Sir Beefton Teefton (Lymeswold, Con): May I congratulate the prime minister on the firm stand he has taken against the Europeans who are trying to blacken the name of honest British beef? *(Tory cheers)* I was told this morning by some chap I met on the train that millions of French and German cows have had this CJD disease for years, but being dishonest foreign types, they've managed to hush it up.

(More Tory cheers)

Ms Primarola Ranter (Hackney, Lab): Is the Right-Honourable murderer aware that even at this minute thousands of toddlers at nursery schools are being force-fed killer beefburgers on the direct orders of John Major and the family lobby...er...

(Tory laughter and shouts of "Burger off!")

Mr Stephen Drivell: I would just like to make another statement to update you on the latest evidence from the scientists and the opinion polls. I have to tell this House that there is absolutely no risk from eating beef, which is why we have decided that we have no option but to slaughter millions of cows to restore public confidence before the next election.

Ms Harperson: Murderer! Murderer!

(Uproar, interrupted by man with tray)

Sir George Young (for it is he): Come buy! Come buy! Lovely Railtrack shares, three a penny! Buy the track and get the stations thrown in free! Lovely shares!

(Sir George then crashes into Mace owing to lack of proper safety precautions. Members rush out to go on BBC television and talk rubbish to Jeremy Paxo for the rest of the evening)

IT'S OFFICIAL — MAD COW DISEASE WILL KILL EVERYBODY BY YEAR 2000

by Our Scaremongering Staff **Liz Teria and Sal Monella**

THIS IS not some mere speculation. *(Yes it is. That's what people want to read. Ed.)* **By the year 2000, millions of innocent men, women and children will be dying in agony every day.**

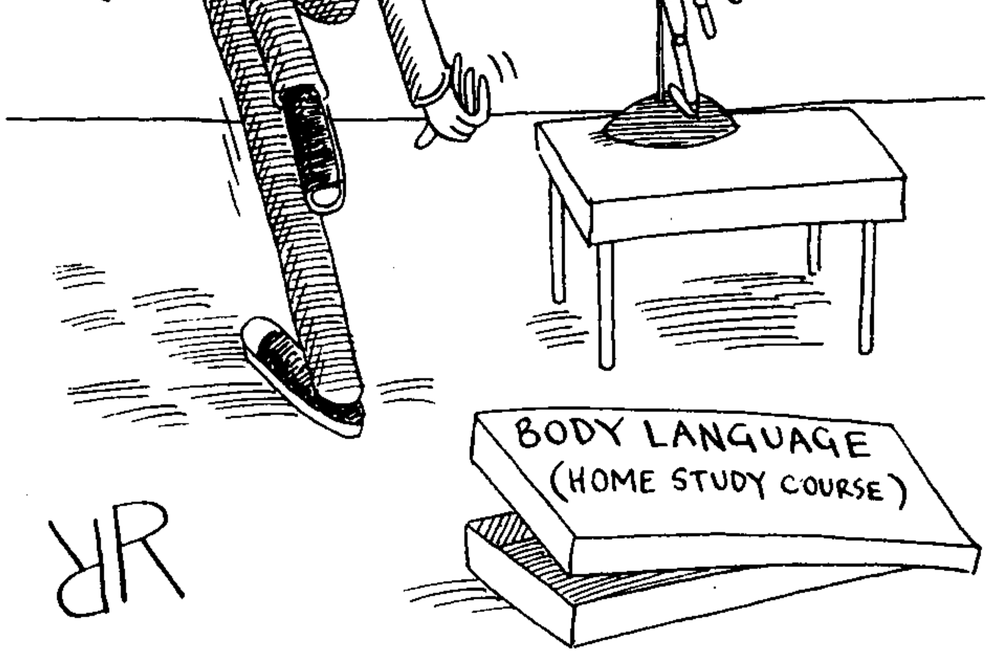
That is the hard, inescapable scientific fact which emerges from our editorial conference today.

Imagine the scenario. England is a wasteland, filled with the stench of burning cattle carcases. The sky is red with the flames of giant incinerators working round the clock to burn the bodies of millions of diseased human beings. Little toddlers will wander the streets, pitifully crying out for their dead parents, before they succumb to the ravages of the new plague CJD, which makes the Black Death look like a vicarage tea party.

Even vicarage tea parties will not be safe. Just imagine — the vicar is sitting there on his lawn pouring out the lapsang souchong, when suddenly his eyes fall out and his tongue turns black.

Europe has built a huge wall, thousands of kilometres high, to prevent dying Britons escaping to the continent. There is no food. No water. No hope.

This is the nightmare scenario, based on hard scientific fact, dreamed up by the *Observer* in conjunction with Professor Richard Lacey, and copied by the *Mirror*, the *Mail* and almost everybody else, in a desperate bid to attract younger readers.



"It was his dying wish. What could I do, vicar?"

Now Government plans to cull smokers

by Our Medical Staff **Lunchtime O'Moos**

MILLIONS of smokers are to be culled after government scientists have been saying for 40 years that there is a definite link between smoking cigarettes and the killer disease lung cancer.

Studies have shown that exposure to cigarette smoke can cause further deaths as the disease "jumps the barrier" between smokers and non-smokers.

Fag End

In a bid to reassure the public, the Government has decided to incinerate millions of smokers to save lives.

ON OTHER PAGES
Are Gays Next?

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Problem of British Beef

From Lord Ree-Smugg OM

Sir, I cannot understand what all the fuss is about. Down here in Somerset we have all had mad cow disease for hundreds of years. As early as 1755, we find a reference to this disease in the journals of my ancestor the Rev. Jeremiah Mogg: "Today I visited my friend Squire Barkworth and there saw a most curious spectacle — viz. his prize herd of cattle lowing most dreadfully and staggering about like drunken sailors. In these parts this malady is known as Auberon's Disease, after a writer of that name who so staggered after drinking a case of claret for Mr Addison's Spectator Wine Club.

I remain, Sir, your humble and deranged servant,
WM. REALLY-SMUGG,
The Old Abattoir,
Somerset.

From St Paul of Johnson

Sir, My family and I took particular pleasure in sitting down to our traditional sunday luncheon, consisting of the following: Oxtail soup, followed by a side of the roast beef of Old England, followed by another side of the same, accompanied by beef sausages, assorted beef offals, pressed tongue, steak and kidney pie, tripe, and minced beef patties. Like good Christians, we rounded off our traditional English repast with roast beef and custard.

I have been eating beef all my life, and yet am as sane as the day is long. In my view all those scaremongers who say that eating beef can cause madness are nothing better than homosexual pederasts, probably from the planet Mars, who should be taken out and slaughtered by highly trained teams of killer wasps *(surely 'bees'? Ed)*.

Yours sincerely,
NAPOLEON JOHNSON,
St Helena,
Somerset.

From Mr Jaspan Carrot, Ex-Editor of the Vegetarian Observer

Sir, To those of us who are vegans, the news that the entire meat-eating population of Britain is shortly to be wiped out as a result of eating the dead flesh of innocent animals, which have in turn been force-fed with their own offal, is welcome indeed.

Yours sincerely,
MOLLY & COLLIE FLOWER,
Editors, Beans and Beanmen,
Somerset.

From Rev. J.C. Flannel

Sir, As it says in the Book of Leviticus xx. v.16-108: "He that giveth the cattle of the earth to eat of the flesh of the sheep of the field or any creeping thing, then woe unto such an one and his children's children. For they shall be accursed above all living things, and shall be visited with an plague of the bovine spongiform encephalitis." It seems the human race has learned nothing in 4000 years. If God had meant cows to become carnivores, he would have told Adam to call them lions (see Genesis 2 17-94).

Yours faithfully,
REV. J.C. FLANNEL,
Team Vicar,
Pastoral Outreach Unit,
St John the Bovine,
Somerset.

From Rollo and Peggy Paunch

Sir, The clientele of our small but select restaurant deep in the heart of the West Country have long since banished beef from our menu, following earlier warnings that it could lead to madness. Typical Tuesday night fare here at Paunch's would include:
Roast Neck Of Swan
Ostrich Steak
Grilled Aardvark
Crocodile Fillet
Squirrel Surprise
Sautéed Badger Liver
Charcoal-Grilled Mink
Earthworm and Cockroach Korma
As we say to our customers, what's all the beef?

Yours faithfully,
MAJOR & MRS R. PAUNCH,
Compton Paunchfolk,
Somerset.

From Mohammed al-Fayed, Proprietor of Punch

Sir, May I humbly suggest that our good old British Beefeaters be renamed in the light of the current scare. Perhaps in future they should be known as the Trouser Press Eaters.

Yours,
A. FAYED,
Harrods,
Somerset.

PS. This brilliant joke was supplied to me by my editor-elect Mr Peter McLie, the World's Worst Columnist.

HOW MAD COW DISEASE DESTROYED BRITAIN

A year-by-year guide to the killer disease that everybody's talking about

1979 MAD Cow Disease first identified in central London. Experts observe the initial mad cow staggering around outside 10 Downing Street quoting St Francis.

1980 NO steps are taken and mad cow begins to infect the rest of the herd (Douglas).

1983 MAD cow hysteria takes over the country as millions suffer from softening of the brain and as a result vote Conservative.

1987 BY now mad cow disease seems unstoppable. Millions go mad as Tories are elected for third time.

1990 AFTER Europe demands the banning of the mad cow, Cabinet agrees to a mass cull of one elderly cow to placate public opinion.

1991 IT becomes clear that the disease has not been eradicated after all, as the entire Government staggers about from crisis to crisis, unable to put a foot right.

1996 DEMANDS grow for complete cull of every Conservative in the country as the only way to restore public confidence. But it is too late.

1997 THE killer disease is reported to have "jumped species" to Labour leader T. Blair, who displays tell-tale symptoms (inane smile and inability to express coherent thoughts).

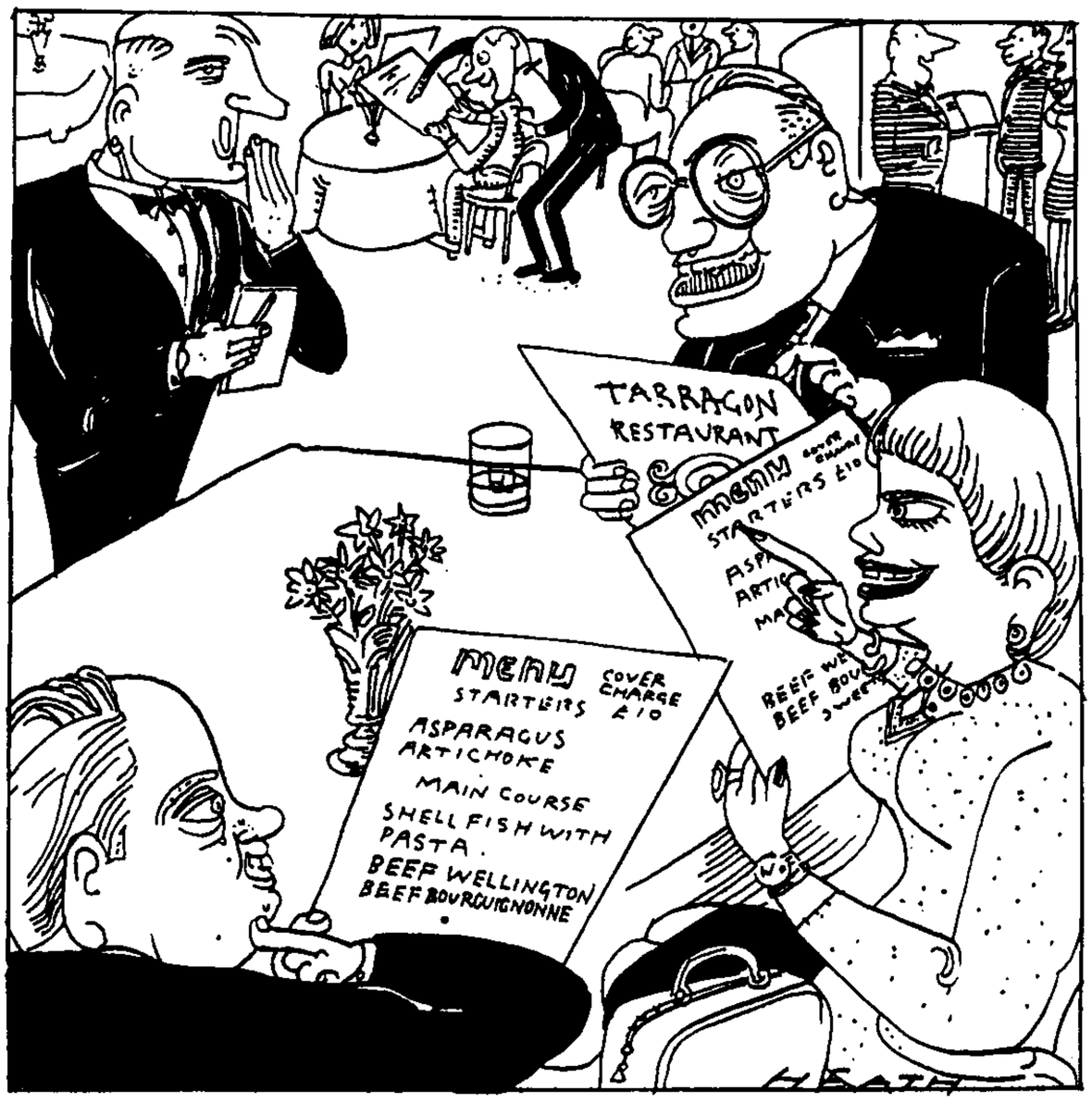
YOUR CUT OUT 'N' KEEP GUIDE TO THOSE PRODUCTS YOU SHOULD AVOID

Few people realise that deadly toxic beef is used in a wide range of everyday household products. These are the top twenty at-risk items to keep away from at all costs:

Mousetraps
Washing-up gloves
Boot polish *(black)*
Waxed dental floss *(especially banana-flavoured)*
Bookshelves
Loft Cladding
Wine Gums
Custard Powder
Toothpaste *(except banana-flavoured)*
Rubber bands
Shoes
Oven cleaners

The Sunday Telegraph

"As fast as Robin took from the rich to give to the poor..."



Great Bores Of Today.

"... it's typical media hysteria a load of fuss about nothing do you remember that rubbish about eggs? everyone's forgotten about it and what about AIDS? we were all going to die of that do you realise that you've got as much chance of getting CJD as you have of being struck by lightning on the same day as winning the lottery and then being run over by a 59 bus ha ha ha it's ludicrous beef is absolutely safe and you don't have to be an expert to know that there's no risk whatever in eating a good bit of fillet steak or topside no I think we should ignore all the scaremongering and rally behind our farmers in the name of common sense... now what are we going to have? you'll have the fish... oh you're a vegetarian are you? ... chicken for you... me? no I'm not terribly hungry actually I'll just have a piece of toast it's awfully good here it's a speciality actually..."

THE REFERENDUM PARTY

Achtung! Achtung!

From: Referendumfuhrer Goldfinger to 007, Johnny Major-Bond

So, time is running out for you Mr Bond. You think you are so clever, but I, Goldfisher, shall have the last laugh. Heh heh heh!

It is now ten months und counting! Unless you accede to all my demands my highly trained Referendum candidates will be activated by remote-control cheque-book. *(Fishfinger points to 100ft x 100ft control console on wall.)* You see this big screen, Mr Bond? This is Basildon, home of ze famous Essex Man, but now for you it is not so funny I zink?

Press the button, zo, and your majority is suddenly wiped out! Kaput! Finished! And it is now mine! It's all mine! Do you hear!! *(Fishpaste strokes white cow [shurely 'cat'? Ed] on lap)*

Issued on behalf of SPECTRE plc, The Bunker, Mexico

A Royal Doctor writes

AS A doctor I am often asked: "Doctor, why are you wearing a skirt and high heels when you are a man?"

The answer is quite simple. The doctor i.e. myself is suffering from a chronic case of *Transsexualis normalis normalis* or, in layman's terms, Jan Morris Syndrome.

What happens is the doctor goes to see the Queen Mother and says: "That's a lovely hat, Ma'am. Can I borrow it for Ascot?"

If you are worried about your doctor changing sex you should write to the *Sunday Times* immediately.

© Dr Thomasina Stuttaford, Dr Jane Le Fanu, Dr Theodora Dalrymple and Dr Marian Alan-Davies.

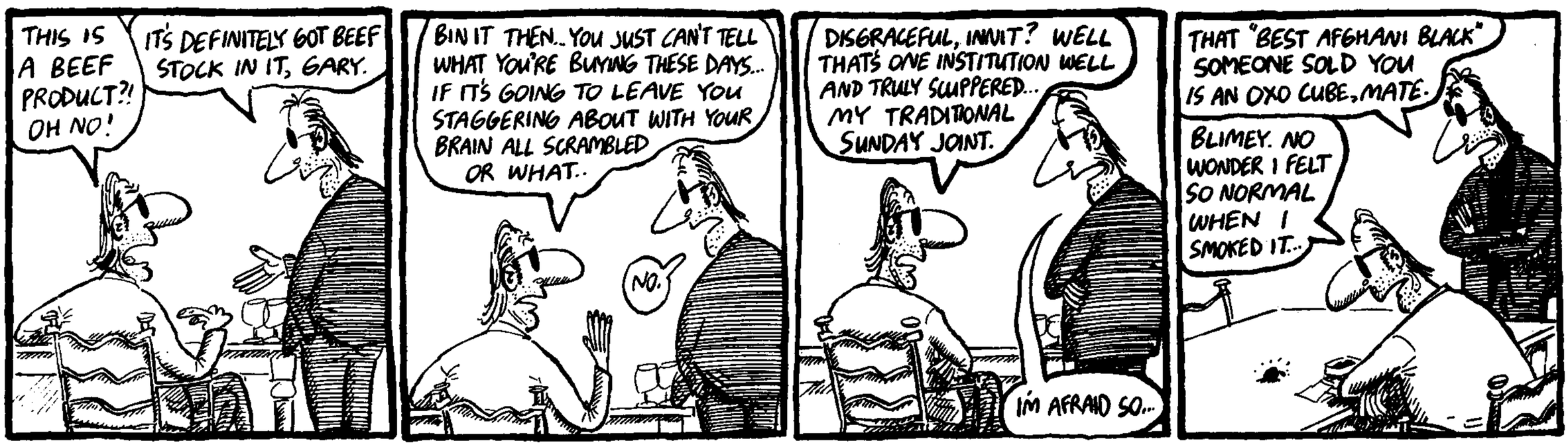
THOSE APRIL FOOL JOKES IN FULL

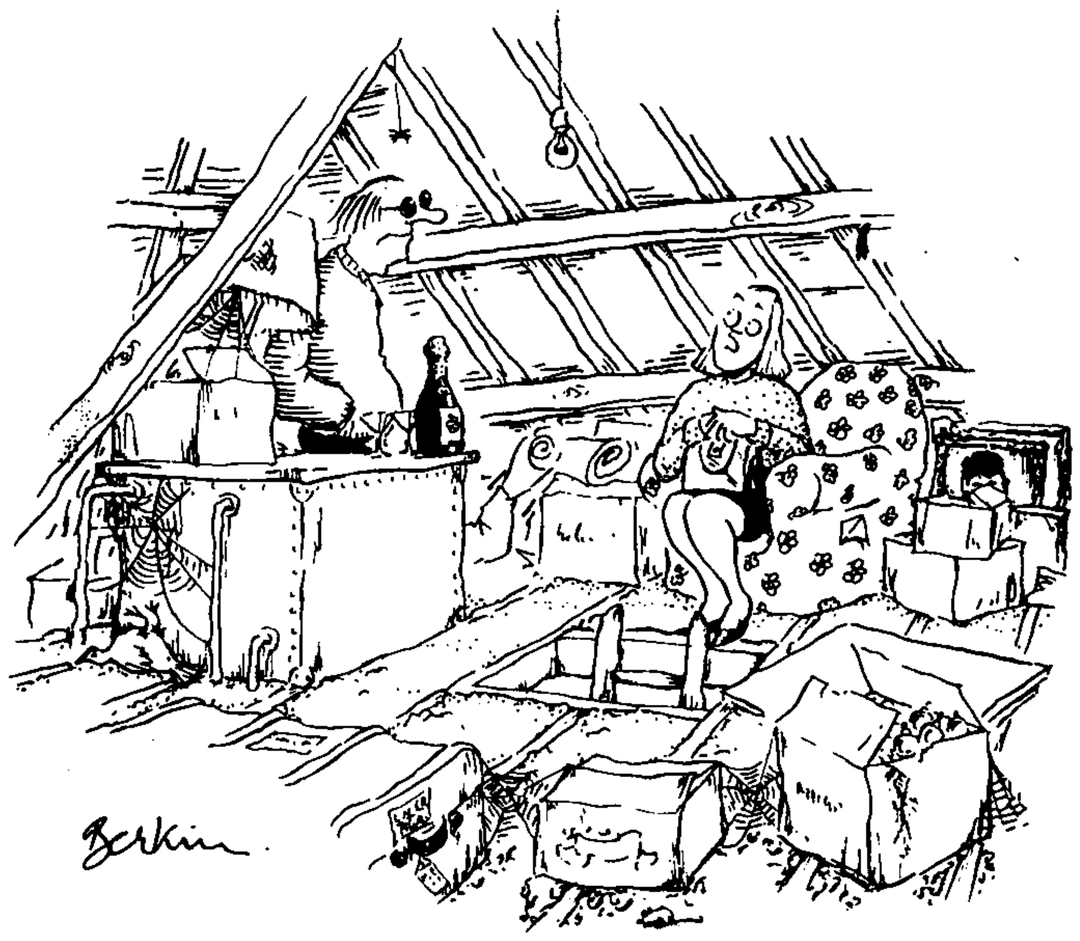
Once again there was a crop of wacky April Fool stories in the national press. We bring you the best of them:

- **Millions of cows to be slaughtered** (*Daily Telegraph*)
- **Jesus Tomb discovered by Joan Bakewell** (*Sunday Times*)
- **Railtrack to be sold off** (*Guardian*)
- **Government minister to resign over BSE farce** (*The Times*)
- ***Daily Mail* awarded newspaper of the year** (*Daily Mail*)

Celeb

LIGGER


THIS IS A BEEF PRODUCT?! OH NO!
IT'S DEFINITELY GOT BEEF STOCK IN IT, GARY.
BIN IT THEN.. YOU JUST CAN'T TELL WHAT YOU'RE BUYING THESE DAYS.. IF IT'S GOING TO LEAVE YOU STAGGERING ABOUT WITH YOUR BRAIN ALL SCRAMBLED OR WHAT..
NO.
DISGRACEFUL, INNIT? WELL THAT'S ONE INSTITUTION WELL AND TRULY SCUPPERED... MY TRADITIONAL SUNDAY JOINT.
I'M AFRAID SO...
THAT "BEST AFGHANI BLACK" SOMEONE SOLD YOU IS AN OXO CUBE, MATE.
BLIMEY. NO WONDER I FELT SO NORMAL WHEN I SMOKED IT..



"It's not a loft-style apartment, Barry — it's just a loft"

Peter McLie

The World's Worst Columnist

(now Editor of the World's Deadest Magazine)

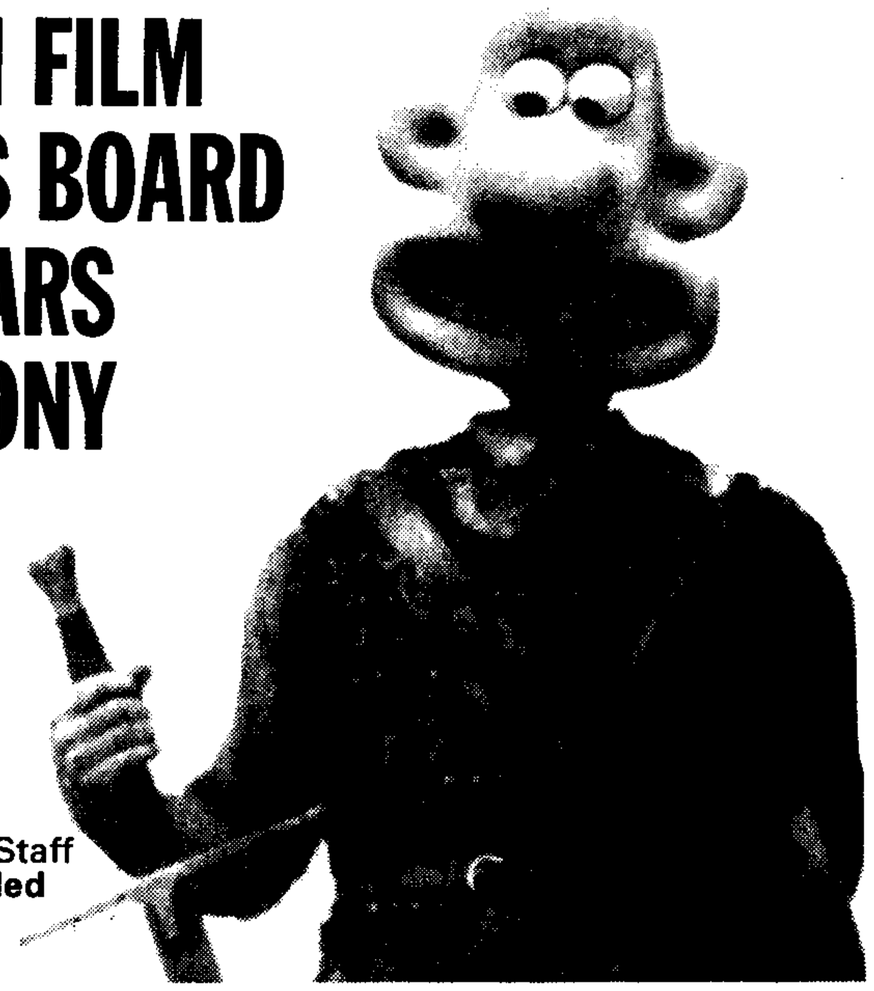
YOU DON'T hear much about Mad Cow Disease any more do you? It's funny that. Anyone would think the whole thing had just died down as if nothing had happened. If I were a cow I would say that life was looking fine and dandy! *(You're fired, Fayed)*

□ *I have received a hamper from Harrods including the most delicious £10 notes beautifully gift wrapped in £20 notes.*

Who can my mysterious benefactor be I wonder? A true Englishman no doubt who deserves a new passport at once? (You're re-Hayed, Fayed)

WHY on earth is there no recognition for actors and actresses who have excelled themselves in the motion picture industry? Why don't they have a special ceremony for them and give away little statuettes to the highest achievers? I even have a name for the awards — the Trouser Press.

BRITISH FILM SWEEPS BOARD AT OSCARS CEREMONY



by Our Showbiz Staff
Jack Tinky and Ned Twinky

THE ANIMATED film epic "William Wallace and Gromit" last night picked up 7 oscars at a star-studded ceremony in Los Angeles.

The film tells the story of the revolt of the Highland clan of the McGromits led by their chieftain William Wallace against the hated English oppressors who had invaded Scotland in an orgy of rape, pillage and speaking in upper-class British accents.

The hero Wallace, played by Mel Gibson, leads his army to London where he wins the battle of Agincourt, overturns the hated tyranny of King John and weds the beautiful Maid Marian, played by Princess Diana.

All the characters in this film are beautifully moulded from plasticine by Oscar-winning British animation expert Nick Parka, except for Mel Gibson who is made of cardboard.

Over two million tons of plasticine were used to recreate the Scottish Highlands at the time of King Arthur in a studio in Brazil.

Cast In Full

Wallace Simpson . . . MEL GIBSON
Robert the Bruce . . . MEL BROOKS
Spiderman . . . . . KEVIN COSTNER
McGromit of the McGromits . . BILLY CONNOLLY
Maid Marian . . . . . LIZ HURLEY
Jane Austen . . . EMMA THOMPSON
Crocodile McDundee . . . . GAZZA
Man in Taxi . . . . . NED SHERRIN

Coming Soon

● *Bravebeard*, **the story of how Irish freedom fighter Gerry McAdams sails to America to throw out the hated British from wherever they are.**

ADVERTISEMENT

DEAD HORSE plc

The Government is now flogging Dead Horse plc (formerly Railtrack) to the general public.

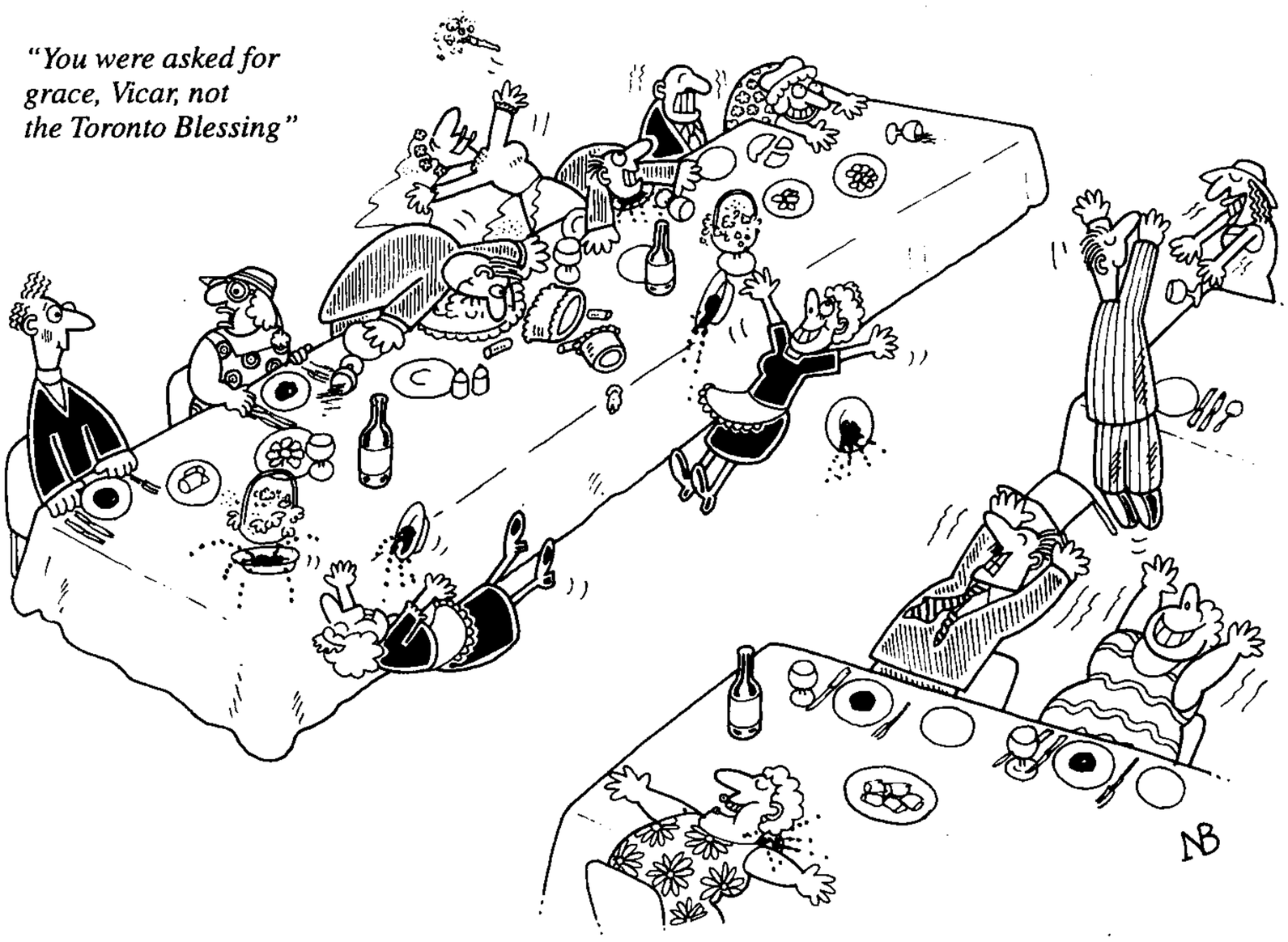
Dead Loss plc (formerly Failtrack) is your last chance to benefit from the exciting new policy that has been the Government's only idea for the last 15 years.

To register for your shares in Dead Duck plc (formerly Tie Rack) call one of the many banks, building societies or other financial intermediaries and give them your money. It's the last you'll see of it.

FAMILY SILVER plc
(formerly yours)

Issued on behalf of nobody by the Department of Transport

"You were asked for grace, Vicar, not the Toronto Blessing"



DIARY

ERIC JACOBS

August 28th-30th, 1992. I have been on a sort of trial honeymoon during which Kingsley Amis would see whether I would be a suitable biographer. We saw a black man on television. "That chap could do with a bloody good bath!" said Kingsley. I laughed uproariously. Kingsley looked on approvingly. I clutched my sides and fell to the ground. Kingsley chuckled admiringly. I sensed things were going my way.

Kingsley poured himself a couple of large Macallans and took them back to his chair. Suddenly, he looked put out and dismayed. "No bloody table to put them on!" he barked. I got down on my hands and knees and positioned myself in front of him. "Much better!" he purred approvingly, placing the two glasses on my back. I stayed in that position for a good two hours, laughing at Kingsley's jokes, sharing his opinions, and making one or two outspoken comments of my own. "... and that's what makes you the genius you are, Kingsley!" was the bullish way I concluded most of my sentences. He seemed to like me standing up to him as an equal in this way — with his brilliantly canny eye for human foible, he can spot a sycophant a mile off.

September 16th 1992. By my count, Kingsley had two black velvets, two or three Macallans, a glass or two of white wine, then the same of red, then all four mixed together, followed by two glasses of a dessert wine and a magnum of red. I jotted them all down, just in case the Sunday Times might be interested in years to come. "Is that really the time?" Kingsley said, with a horrified expression on his face. "But it's way past opening-time!". He got up to move, signalling that I should do the same. So I got off my hands and knees and followed him to the door, just in time to open it for him. I sense that Kingsley has begun to like me, perhaps more than anyone else in the world: he even lets me polish his shoes for him, and he laughs at every single one of his jokes when I repeat them.

December 11th 1992: Kingsley told me about a lunch he had had with the Queen about 20 years ago. He arrived at Buckingham Palace bang on time and met the other guests. A flunkey gave him a large gin and tonic, and then a Scotch. The Queen and Prince Philip then arrived in the room, and he was given another Scotch, this time a large one. Then they all went though for lunch, where he managed to knock back three glasses of white wine with the soup course, two of red with the main course, a decent couple of glasses of a "ghastly" dessert wine with pudding and "upwards of half a bottle of port" with the cheese and biccies before saying his goodbyes. A memorable meeting, described as only such a distinguished writer could. I couldn't help asking Kingsley what the Queen was like. Much like any other woman, he said, though probably not a great reader.

June 4th 1993: Kingsley fell down the stairs in the Garrick today. Rotten luck: I had forgotten my notebook. Dashed to the Porter's Desk and nabbed a pencil and paper. Counted the stairs — 24 in all, with Kingsley's drink spilling mainly on the 17th, though a bit on the 18th as well. Jotted it down as quickly as poss. Then rushed to Kingsley's side, to help him up — the very least I could do.

August 5th 1994: I take Kingsley to lunch *a deux* at The Garrick to cheer him up. I open up my fund of amusing stories about myself, and say I have to admit that I am pretty pleased with my life so far, no real complaints even if it has been a bit of a bumpy ride, before regaling him with anecdotes about the various famous writers I have met over the years, some of them mutual friends. Kingsley puts on the concentrated expression I know so well: his eyes are closed tight, and from time to time he emits a grunting sound, not unlike a snore.

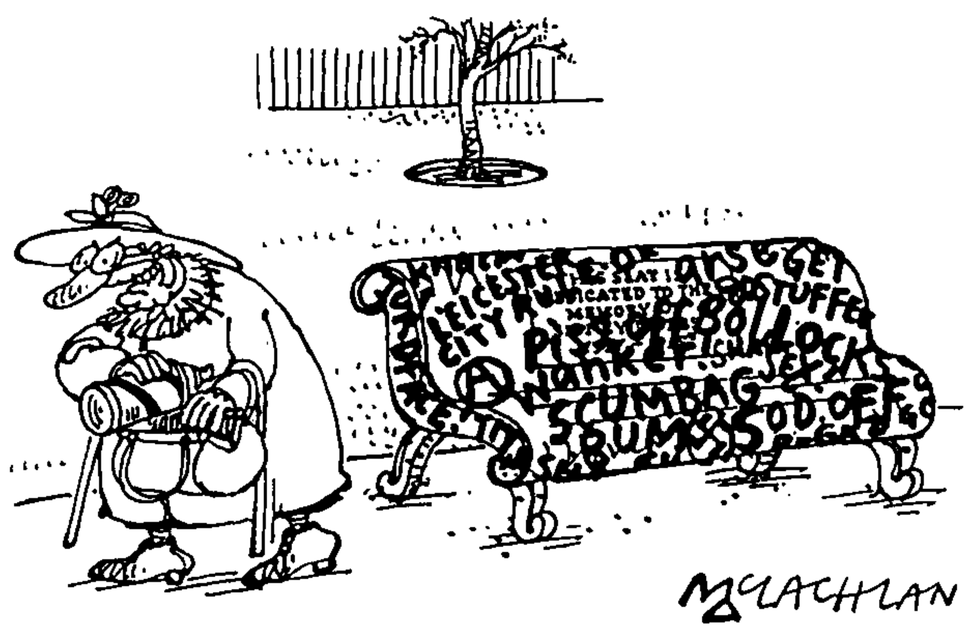
November 8th, 1994: Kingsley catches flu and is feeling poorly. Will it develop into something worse? I order a king-size jotter pad from my newsagent's, just in case. Better safe than sorry.

November 15th, 1994: He seems to be in pretty poor shape. Rang my agent, who says he will let the Sunday Times know. Went and saw Kingsley, made handy list of things he has by his bedside for future reference. Martin Amis dropped by to see his father while I was there. I lent — gave — him £4 for a taxi. Don't expect to see that again in a long time. Reflect, not for the first time, what extraordinary lengths people will go to in pursuit of cash.

February 19th, 1995: In any deep friendship that endures, material interest must play its part. With Kingsley and I, we have developed a system of give and take: he gives, I take. It works perfectly satisfactorily. I get a biography out of it, and so does he, so it's all scrupulously fair. But today Kingsley refused to spend two hours by himself with an Australian journalist in order to promote my book. Strange how selfish some people can be. Martin dropped by to see his father. I let him stay chatting to Kingsley for some time, even though Kingsley has privately told me he finds Martin's novels a bit heavy-going. I made a note of the remark at the time, thinking it might come in useful to broadcast later, vis-a-vis any future dispute. As he left, I laughed uproariously at Martin's jokes and offered to give his shoes a quick polish. One never knows when he'll be in need of a good biographer, does one?

October 23rd, 1995: Kingsley died yesterday, so no need for a new jotter pad, saving myself £1.25. I have got a good few thousand words on Kingsley's last illness now. They may be vital for an understanding of his work, particularly for the general reader who can't be bothered to read the books but is quite keen to read the best bits about his last illness. I have never intended these diaries for publication so I send them to The Sunday Times for a second opinion. Martin leaves a message telling me that he and his family don't like the idea, so I honourably withdraw them. I write in the diaries that I have honourably withdrawn them. Then, my honour intact, I give the Sunday Times the go-ahead to publish.

With Kingsley out of the way, I try to think of someone old but still breathing worth a decent biography. Stroll into the Garrick for drinks and look around. Various elderly writers about, some with knighthoods. Beaming genially, I approach them with outstretched hand and the offer of a double Scotch. With the other hand, I ease the top off my biro.



Literary Review

Stuck in a rut

Appassionata
Jilly Cooper
(Bantam, £16.99)

APPASSIONATA, Jilly's new one, is a quite splendid multi-media package. A CD and cassette tape add-on. A TV documentary (*Bookmark*, unbelievably). A glistening hardcover artefact. Seven pages of thank-yous and without-whoms. A quarter of a million words. About music. *Classical* music, if it comes to that. It is, of course, ineffably silly. And vulgar. And badly-written. Oh, and vulgar.

But then you know that. Alas, one of the problems facing Ms Cooper's eager critics lies in finding something to tell the reader about her that he doesn't already know; something, more to the point, that might just stop him (or her) buying the book ("Just a joke, you know!") Here goes.

There is, in fact, a kind of brilliance, an inspired devilish pertinacity, in Jilly's ability to fulfil the expectations we all have of her, even in the preposterous yarn about a sultry violinist who tries to kill herself, fails, repents, and then (having done irreparable damage to her bow hand) makes a comeback as conductor with the RSO (Rutshire Symphony Orchestra, natch). Abigail topping herself? Somehow there is an absolute *boldness* in the way Jilly imagines "massive" to be a suitable adjective for "blood transfusion" or "pitifully slow" the appropriate garnish for the rehabilitation of the shattered nerve ends. You have to be pretty damn good to be this bad.

But then this is Jilly's bag. I don't mean to be ungracious — well, I do — but this is a prose style of quite uncategorisable obviousness and languor. An Argentine nunnery? "...A sanctuary amid the squalor, appalling poverty and brutal crime of the slums." The nun met at its portal? "Femininity and charm itself." The mark of this kind of writing is its complete isolation from anything that might be described as thought. Take this account of her heroine's, ah, personal charms: "Her striking, thick black brows above the tigerish yellow eyes, her hooked nose, huge dropping mouth, wide jaw, thick dark curly hair..." I don't believe Jilly paused for a second to consider what Abby really looks like (startlingly grotesque, if taken literally), she simply plunged on with, well, some words that sounded OK.

Never mind, it's all *jolly instructive* ("The Bartok concerto is extremely difficult...") and filled with hilarious sexy bits. There is, as it happens, a stock way of disparaging a Jilly Cooper novel: a bit of giggling, judicious quotation from the bonkfest and an apologetic sign-off of the "Oh, but people *love* her" sort. Forget it. The implications aren't worth thinking about. When we get red-faced about censorship, when we complain about technology robbing children of books, when we talk about preserving libraries, this, regrettably, is the kind of tosh we are defending.

The only thing — the *only* thing — that can be said in Jilly's favour is that a tiny fraction of the vast profits made out of her by Transworld might just go to subsidise someone who doesn't write about "massive" blood transfusions or men who are (gasp) "kind, sophisticated, utterly honourable...."

Books & Bookmen

■ **NOT content with bringing down Barings, Nick Leeson is creating a dent in the accounts of Little, Brown as well.**

The former publisher of the year (1994) suffered a rush of blood to the head and paid superagent Ed Victor £450,000 for Leeson's memoir, *Rogue Trader*. The company's overconfident assumption that it could recoup a good portion of the advance through a serial sale appeared to be justified when the *Daily Mail* bought the rights. But this was dashed when someone pointed out that the *Mail* was offering money to a crook. The paper assuaged its conscience by paying Little, Brown nothing and committing a sum to television advertising instead.

This honourable and commercially expedient decision has left Little, Brown in the lurch. With sales of *Rogue Trader* slowing down, the company is still about £300,000 in arrears.

□ ADMIRERS of Anthony Powell's *Journals 1982-86*, published last year, will be pleased to know that their successor, *Journals 1987-89*, is no less outspoken in its critical judgments.

Victims of Mr Powell's acerbity include Julian Barnes's *A History Of The World in 10½ Chapters* ("This seemed to be beyond my understanding. I simply could not see the point... I think that Barnes is probably quite an intelligent, fairly conceited chap, without enough creative fantasy to be a continuing novelist."); Salman Rushdie ("a tedious writer, publicity-seeking in a distasteful way" — although of the *fatwa* Powell charitably concedes "this seems to be going too far on the Ayatollah's part"); and the critic Valentine Cunningham ("awful little bearded creep").

Happily Powell is consoled by rereading his 12-volume *A Dance To The Music Of Time*: "This novel, for better or worse, seemed to me quite on its own in content, construction."

'Bookworm'

REMAINDERS OF THE DAY

THE BOOK: Jeffrey Archer's latest blockbuster, *Twelve Red Herrings*.

THE HYPE: Published by the mighty HarperCollins in 1994 for £14.99, this collection of short stories from the pen of Lord Archer was bound to be another hit.

THE PRICE: World Books, a book club, has taken to sending out their members requests with an unrequested and completely free copy of, er, *Twelve Red Herrings*.

LUVVIES

Phil, David and Bridget are marvellous; they're like a surrogate family.

I particularly value them on heebie-jeebie days, when I feel camera-shy and nervous. Days like that can hit you unexpectedly, especially if you're stuck on a bit of dialogue, and you have to push yourself through them. For example, if I'm holding a cup of tea in a scene and it shakes, I scrunch up my hands and toes under the table to create another focus for my nervous energy.

SIMON SHEPHERD
Radio Times

Submitted by Miranda Bird.

An occasional column devoted to gems from the acting profession. £10 paid for entries.

MUSIC & MUSICIANS

DESPITE all the fiddling in Jilly Cooper's classical music bonk*fest* *Appassionata* (see Literary Review), the issue vexing Britain's real musicians is more prosaic: big cuts in travel expenses.

The organisation to thank is the Association of British Orchestras (ABO), the nearest thing music has to an employers' organisation. The moment former antique dealer and LSO cellist Clive "Lovejoy" Gillinson handed over the chair to Northern Sinfonia boss John "Yorkie" Summers, musicians knew they were in for trouble.

Having started as a van driver, "Yorkie's" combination of energy and nous eventually saw him running the Newcastle-based orchestra. He felt agreements between the ABO and Musicians' Union on pay and conditions hampered his ability to fill the diary, so he tried to persuade the orchestra to leave the union, tear up agreements and set up a Soviet-style workers' co-op with him as chief commissar. Musicians saw through his plan, which would have allowed him to pay them as little as possible, and they remained loyal to the MU.

As chairman of the ABO Yorkie can claim much of the credit for the latest ABO/MU agreement which severely restricts travel payments for musicians. When they use their cars they will now receive a pitiful 10p per mile. Summers and fellow ABO managers will continue to get the AA-recommended rate of 35p per mile.

'Lunchtime O'Boulez'

SNIPCOCK & TWEED
DENIS THATCHER BOOK LAUNCH
ISN'T IT BAD FOR YOUR IMAGE - BEING ASSOCIATED WITH DRUNKEN OLD BUFFOONS?
GIN
GORDON'S GIN
BELOW THE PARAPET
CAROL THATCHER
THATCHE OK LAUNCH
NO - WE DO A LOT OF WORK WITH PUBLISHERS
GIN

footnotes

The Colin Wallace story

DIAL MoD FOR...?

COLIN WALLACE, pictured by order of 'Kaymar Studios'

AN ANONYMOUS letter to the *Eye* on House of Commons notepaper gives a new twist to the bizarre story of former army information officer Colin Wallace. It suggests government involvement in a cruel trick which helped convict Wallace of killing his closest friend.

In 1975 Wallace, an Ulsterman who specialised in black propaganda for the British army, was suddenly and inexplicably sacked. He claimed his sacking was the result of his refusal to cooperate with an extremist gang in the intelligence services who wanted to bring down the then Labour government.

The nobblers from MI5

Many years later the government finally admitted that Wallace's appeal against dismissal had been nobbled by the security services, and he was paid £30,000 compensation. For years after his sacking, however, he was dogged by victimisation, blacklisting, dirty tricks and smears.

In 1981 he was convicted of killing his friend, antique dealer Jonathan Lewis. The prosecution case was that he had knocked out Lewis with an unusual and professional blow to the face, and dumped the unconscious body in the river Arun, where it was found dead several days later. In 1981, Wallace, who has always vehemently denied the killing, was convicted of manslaughter and served six years of a 10-year sentence.

The home secretary has recently referred his case to the court of appeal. Among the matters Wallace wants to raise is a mysterious phone call he received a few months before Lewis's murder from a firm calling itself "Kaymar Studios". The caller said the firm was marketing specialist parachutes. He said he'd heard from a minister of defence contact that Wallace had such a parachute, and asked if he would help them by posing for a photograph wearing the parachute.

It was important, the caller added, that Wallace should wear full army uniform including the badge of the SAS to which Wallace was seconded in 1971 as an information officer. Wallace, who was then working for Arun council, agreed, took down Kaymar's London number and engaged freelance photographer James Clevett to take the pictures at a Sussex aerodrome.

Wallace called Kaymar to say the negatives were ready, and was told to convert them into blow-ups. A day or two later, he rang Kaymar again to ask for details of the blow-ups required. This time, both phone numbers he'd been given by Kaymar had gone dead. Directory inquiries said the numbers didn't exist. No one there or anywhere else had ever heard of Kaymar Studios.

Two years later, when Wallace stood trial at Lewes crown court, Clevett was suddenly besieged by the media demanding the Wallace pictures. The opening speech of the prosecution alleged that the strange blow which knocked out Lewis could only have come from someone trained in hand-to-hand combat.

The following morning three national newspapers featured prominent pictures of Wallace in his uniform, his parachute and his SAS badge. At once, Wallace the mild information officer was replaced in the jury's mind by Wallace the SAS fighter. In vain did Wallace and his lawyers plead that he had never had any experience of unarmed combat. As all his lawyers have since testified, the photographs forced the defence on to the defensive.

Dear Mr. Major...

Preparing his case for his appeal, Wallace made a determined effort to track down the mysterious Kaymar. On 7 January, he wrote to John Major "in your capacity as nominal head of the intelligence services". He listed the two numbers he'd been given by "Kaymar" — 01-434-1162 and 01-374-0075 — and wrote: "I should be very grateful if you could confirm or deny that either of those telephone numbers was used by any organisation or individual acting for or employed by the government during the period 1979-1981 inclusive."

Major replied, through Wallace's MP Sir Michael Marshall, on 21 February. Bluntly refusing to answer what he had been asked, the prime minister suggested that Wallace's lawyers pursue their inquiries through "the established procedures" — for instance by approaching "the telephone service providers". On the same day (22 Feb) that Wallace got his letter from 10 Downing Street, an anonymous letter on House of Commons notepaper arrived through the post at the *Eye* offices, as follows.

The ministry regrets...

"For reasons which I am sure you will understand I would prefer not to identify myself to you. I have been given two telephone numbers (01-374-0075 and 01-434-1162) which I believe have been linked to a company known as "Kaymar Studios" in Colin Wallace's case, and I have been told you are anxious to discover the identity of the users of those phone numbers in 1980.

"Both numbers were allocated to the Ministry of Defence during the late 1970s, but they were not listed in any of the Ministry's directories in 1980. It is possible therefore that either they were not allocated within the Ministry or that they were used for intelligence or security purposes."

Was the letter a hoax — as its tone and anonymity suggests? Its most curious feature was the accuracy of the two numbers. Wallace had only just retrieved the numbers from old case papers. He had passed them on to his lawyers and to the Prime Minister but not to the *Eye*.

On 28 February the *Eye* sent a long fax to the press secretary at the ministry of defence, setting out the sequence of events and asking if the phone numbers had ever been MoD numbers or likely to have been used for intelligence or security purposes.

Two days later the ministry replied in writing to explain it could not provide the information for the next *Eye* issue (dated 8 March). A fortnight later, the ministry announced it could not get the answers for the next issue either (22 March). Finally, on 27 March, almost exactly a month after the questions went in, the ministry came up with this: "In order to answer your questions, it seems that considerable research would be required. We have been considering how best we might take this forward and will reply when we are in a position to do so."

Any such answer will of course be passed on. Meanwhile, is there any chance the *Eye* source could assist the department of state charged with defending the nation to find out what its own telephone numbers were 16 years ago?

SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

WHAT MR AITKEN WRITES:

"In the weeks before I attended my first BMARC board meeting on November 2 — my business activities had been conducted on the Arabian side of the Gulf. I had no knowledge or business experience of Iran."

— The Rt Hon Jonathan Aitken MP, in his written statement to the House of Commons trade and industry select committee investigation into allegations that BMARC, Aitken's arms company, sold arms to Iran.

WHAT MR AITKEN SAYS:

Jonathan Aitken MP: "IMEG, if I recall correctly, was an oil services consultancy company. I was briefly on the board of it" [In the late 1970s].

Joan Whalley MP: "There were other directors who were involved with Iran and who lived in Teheran at the time, were there not? So obviously there were links with Iran."

Jonathan Aitken MP: "Absolutely."

— Oral evidence to the Commons trade and industry select committee, 6 March 1996.

Methadone madness

DAVID DAVIES: died in prison

■ ON 5 MAY 1994, David Wilkins, who was serving an 18-month sentence for handling stolen goods, was found dead in Brixton prison. The cause of death was an overdose of methadone, a highly toxic drug, prescribed by the prison authorities.

At the inquest a few weeks later — on 4 July — the jury recorded an open verdict. Coroner Sir Montague Levine wrote to the prison governor stating: "There is need for a review of the searching of prisoners for drugs on admission to the prison and of methods to ascertain drugs being administered or prescribed by other agencies prior to admission to prison."

On 1 June 1994, Carl Owens, who was on remand, convicted of nothing, was found dead in Brixton prison. The cause of death was an overdose of methadone prescribed by the prison authorities. The inquest verdict was death by misadventure. Sir Montague wrote again to the prison governor with 13 recommendations demanding training programmes, "absolutely essential" urine tests, efforts to obtain medical histories, etc. etc.

On 16 September 1994, David Davies, who was serving a seven-day sentence for non-payment of an £85 fine, was found dead in Brixton prison. The cause of death was an overdose of methadone prescribed by the prison authorities. The inquest verdict was death by misadventure.

Inquest, a voluntary organisation which provided lawyers for the families of Carl Owens and David Davies, complains about "the practice of prison doctors who feel free to prescribe dangerous drugs such as methadone without even trying to obtain previous medical records. In the Davies case, all that was necessary was a telephone call to the GP practice he attended all his life a few miles away from the prison. According to their families, neither Carl Owens nor David Davies were heroin users, and therefore certainly should not have been prescribed methadone."

Louise Christian, David Davies's family's lawyer, says she will be writing to the General Medical Council drawing its attention to the role in the Davies and Owens cases of the Brixton prison doctor Dr Archibald Alexander. David's father, Don, tells the *Eye*: "I can't accept the verdict. My son was 22 and he was due out of prison the day he died."

LANDOWNERS REGULATING LANDOWNERS, Lord de Ramsey (left) and John Norris

High pollutin'

■ MORE about John Major's luckiest constituent, the 4th Baron de Ramsey of Huntingdon, who, even though he hasn't got a vote, is chairing the new Environment Agency charged with protecting the nation from pollution.

The fourth baron is a former president of the Country Landowners' Association, which gave evidence to the House of Commons environment committee on the proposals for a new monster regulatory quango for the environment. "We recognise," it said, "that a minimum of regulation is often in the interests of landowners." How exceedingly fortunate for landowners, therefore, that a past president of their association should now chair the new regulating authority. And how even more fortunate that another past president, John Norris, also serves on the Environment Agency and is in charge of the Anglia region.

BBC's *Here and Now* (27 March) listed other newly-appointed executives of the agency whose past careers show a marked commitment to minimum regulation. They include Christopher Hampson, chairman of Ready Mixed Concrete, which is constantly being fined for pollution; and Brian Alexander, who was managing director of North West Water when it was prosecuted four times for pollution by the National Rivers Authority (now merged with Mr Alexander's new Environment Agency).

The Eye can add Miles Wilson, the agency's new director of corporate affairs; and its new chief executive Ed Gallagher. Both come fresh from the upper reaches of Amersham International, which is engaged in an irritating battle with anti-nuclear campaigners in South Wales. The campaigners' insistence that there is a connection between emissions from Amersham's plants at Whitchurch and high rates of infant mortality used to be a matter for Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution — but will now be fully and fairly investigated by the Environment Agency.

THE FAILURE OF GLOUCESTER

■ IT'S NOT every day a judge gets a letter from a jury complaining that a long and prominent case has been a complete waste of time, and that the prosecution should never have been brought.

But that is just what has happened after the long and very expensive Bristol crown court case of R. v Cross and others (New Barns).

New Barns, a large Victorian house in the Cotswolds near Cheltenham, was a highly successful residential school run by the Homer Lane Trust for children aged six to 13 with severe emotional and behavioural problems. Though the children were some of the toughest and most uncontrollable in the country, the team who ran the school stuck strictly to a policy of encouragement rather than punishment.

Gloucestershire police and social services started to take an interest in the school in 1992 when a trustee — who had nothing to do with its day-to-day management — was fined £900 for importing pornographic literature. They launched a long and heavy investigation. Eventually, eight members of the school staff team, including its former principal John Cross, were charged with conspiracy to commit false imprisonment. The evidence boiled down to the fact that when any of the children had tantrums or started to unsettle the others, as they constantly did they would be taken elsewhere in the building. Sometimes they would be shut up in a small room on the ground floor known as "the snug".

As the case unfolded the court heard more and more evidence about the patience, tolerance, good nature and popularity of the defendants; and about their outstanding success in running a school in the most difficult circumstances. In the entire 27 years of the school's existence, not a single child from New Barns appeared before a youth court. From early on it was quite clear that the charges expressed the exact opposite of what went on at New Barns. Yet the trial dragged on and on for 20 weeks until the inevitable not guilty verdicts on all counts for all defendants.

New Barns is now closed. Its teachers and carers are dispersed, their lives disrupted and in some cases ruined. Some of them are unemployed and (certainly as long as the case went on) unemployable. The case was the longest ever heard at Bristol crown court. The fees of the 10 barristers alone will cost the public £1 million. Yet from the Gloucestershire constabulary, the county's social services department and the crown prosecution service there has been not a single word of apology or even regret.

Gummerdämmerung

THE board of the Royal Opera House has found just the right man to succeed Sir Angus Stirling as chairman. He is Peter Gummer, chairman of Shandwick, one of the world's largest public relations groups.

Mr Gummer's special qualifications for the job are twofold:

1) He was chairman of the lottery advisory panel of the Arts Council, which last year made the fantastic decision to hand out £78 million of lottery money for the refurbishing of the Royal Opera House in Covent Garden.

2) He is the brother of John Selwyn Gummer, secretary of state for the environment, who recently "called in" the Royal Opera House's controversial plan to build a substitute theatre on a huge site at Hays Wharf, Southwark, originally designated for low-rent housing. John Gummer will now have to decide whether to grant planning permission for the scheme so badly sought after by his brother.

PETER GUMMER

You can write to Paul Foot at 6 Carlisle Street, London W1V 5RG, or leave a message for him on 0171 287 3183

In the City

AT ITS usual snail-shaming pace, the Department of Timidity and Inaction continues to pursue convicted conman Roger Levitt over his role as the not-so-behind-the-scenes force at International Boxing Corporation.

The DTI has made clear in its approaches to those who had dealings with the now dormant IBC that it is looking for evidence to prosecute Levitt for breaching the director's disqualification order made against him in 1993. Levitt was banned for seven years from being involved in the management of a company as a result of his fraud conviction over the collapse of Levitt Group. This penalty was somewhat more severe than the infamous 180-hour community service he also received.

The DTI investigation is being handled by its solicitor's office investigations division, which has been interviewing potential witnesses for several months. Should the DTI decide to prosecute Levitt he could face a sentence somewhat more inconvenient than community service.

One person the DTI should certainly interview is former IBC director Mike Jacobs. He has admitted to the British Boxing Board of Control that he "fronted" at IBC for Levitt. IBC's failure to pay Jacobs the £26,000 he claimed to be owed helped propel the former referee turned manager into bankruptcy costing Jacobs' his manager's licence. Jacobs is appealing this decision, so perhaps he will have more to say on Levitt.

According to Jacobs, IBC's finances and commercial deals were controlled by Levitt. Jacobs claims Levitt had agreed to stay in the background but found that too much out of character. The money behind IBC, which enabled it to sign on and retain several British and overseas boxers, was all provided by Levitt and supposed American partners.

To get round the disqualification order Levitt transferred IBC's business and assets to a partnership called IBC. The ban only applies to directorships of limited companies. Levitt has an 89 percent interest in the partnership with a Guernsey company and Jacobs. However, the DTI is probing Levitt's role in IBC Limited before the creation of the partnership in September 1994 to see whether he was a "shadow director".

Although Levitt and Jacobs have fallen out big time, Roger the Dodger continues to maintain his links to certain boxers once contracted to IBC. He has been spotted recently at two London promotions featuring prospect Spencer Oliver and Keith Lueshing who in February became British welterweight champion. It is suspected that Levitt or IBC retain some commercial arrangement with Lueshing and possibly Oliver. According to Jacobs, Levitt and IBC had an interest in Lueshing as a result of paying him a monthly retainer. Given that neither Levitt or IBC has ever held any licence from the BBBC, that arrangement might also repay investigation by the DTI.

MORE — but alas unflattering — information has emerged regarding the adventures of Rupert Galliers-Pratt in Kazakhstan with Princess Resources, his latest Vancouver Stock Exchange trap for the unwary.

An affidavit made by Sandy Laird, a director of Princess's erstwhile partner, Canadian mining group Placer Dome, in a proposed Kazakh gold mine, suggests "RPG" behaved somewhat less than is expected of Old Etonians. Furthermore, it appears that — as in other deals in the former Soviet Union — "RPG" is in business in Kazakhstan with none other than property man and networker Elliott Bernerd.

Bernerd headed a group of London investors teamed up with one Grigori Loutchansky, who had the crucial connections with Kazakh government officials. It was the Bernerd group which formed Consolidated Mines of Kazakhstan (CMK) in which Princess invested and then paid a supposedly refundable $7.5 million deposit which has proved somewhat hard to retrieve since the gold mine deal fell through. Interestingly, Placer Dome maintains it paid $35 million to the Kazakh government to get the gold deal underway. What and who Princess paid $7.5 million for is somewhat less than clear as is why it has not been returned.

Laird says Placer Dome believed Bernerd and his Russian partner would come up with the $100 million needed for its 45 percent share of the mine, either from their own resources or through a flotation in the US or Europe. Instead, enter the VSE and Princess Resources, a "shell" controlled by RPG and friends.

This did not impress Placer Dome, especially as Princess was to replace Bernerd and associates as the sole shareholder in CMK. This switch, and difficulties in finalising a deal with CMK, plus a less than glowing evaluation report on the mine, persuaded Placer Dome to pull out and offer its 55 percent stake to CMK. CMK agreed to pay Placer Dome $3 million in part payment for its shares by last September. In return it obtained access to Placer Dome's evaluation data which had cost almost $6 million. This deal was not completed.

Instead "RPG" declared the deal was dead and began negotiating directly with the Kazakh government on behalf of Princess using, so Placer Dome claims, its information. Laird says Placer not only did not agree to Princess using its information but maintained that "RPG" had no right to negotiate any new deal. When "RPG" persisted with his attempt to sign the gold deal for Princess, Placer Dome sued Princess and Galliers-Pratt last October in British Columbia for return of its information. This action has been adjourned.

All of which can only give great confidence to those who do business with Rupert Galliers-Pratt and his PR man, David Burnside of British Airways "dirty tricks" fame.

AN investor health warning. British investors may be tempted by International Tire [*sic*] Recycling and Manufacturing — yet another bizarre VSE promotion which is looking for $6 million. The *Mail on Sunday* gave a helping hand in February with a glowing item about INTIRMAC's still to be closed deal to reprocess tyres using convict labour at a Californian prison.

INTIRMAC's shares have soared on the VSE from 50 cents to CAN $2.63 in five months since the company returned from the dead after being interred as Innovative Waste Technologies. But so far no major deal has been consummated. Furthermore, some of those involved with INTIRMAC have a record of dubious VSE promotions and litigation by angry creditors and shareholders.

CLIENTS of financial PR firms should ask a few questions if they are advised to use the expensive services of the City presentation centre for press or analyst conferences.

The first question should be whether any directors of the PR firm are shareholders in City Conference Services which owns the centre. A number of well known PR figures subscribed for shares. It is believed that PR companies using the centre receive a "kick-back" of up to 17.5 percent. Doubtless they all declare such arrangements to their clients.

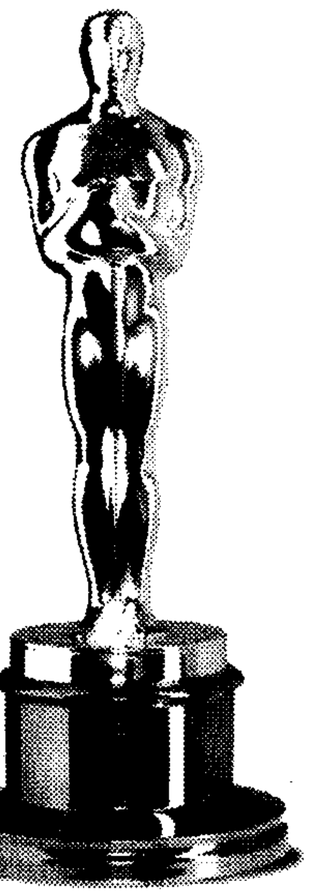
FOLLOWERS of the business career of high street wannabe Stephen Hinchliffe continue to wait on the appearance of the first set of accounts for his Facia group which has gobbled up such names as Sock Shop, Freeman Hardy & Willis, Salisburys, Trueform and Saxone.

Facia was formed in July 1994. Its financial year end is January but it would appear that no accounts are being produced for the period to January 1995. For if so they are now seven months late. More likely it seems the retail world will have to wait until August, which is the deadline for the accounts to January 1996.

Retail experts can only wait and wonder how Hinchliffe can make money out of so many other retailers' cast-offs. Meanwhile there is no truth in suggestions that a foreign bank, somewhat surprised at the extent of its London branch's exposure to Hinchliffe, has agreed to reschedule its loans.

'Slicker'

An ORNAMENT



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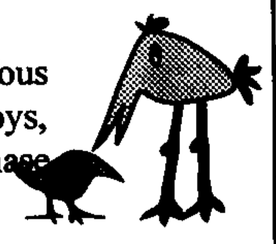

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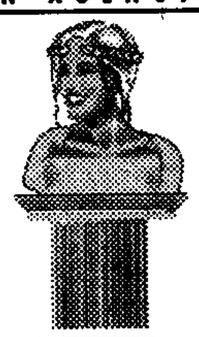

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QUOTE

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ROBERT JOSEPH
Sunday Telegraph Magazine

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SPEECHWRITING by Mitch Murray. See Page 30.

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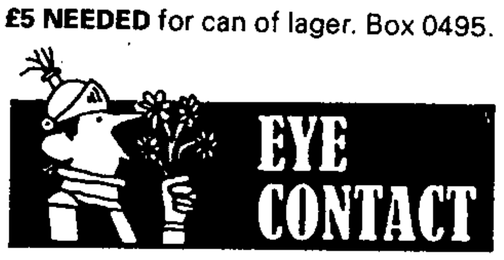

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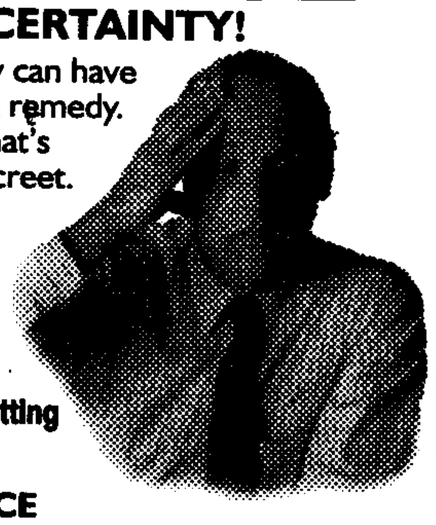

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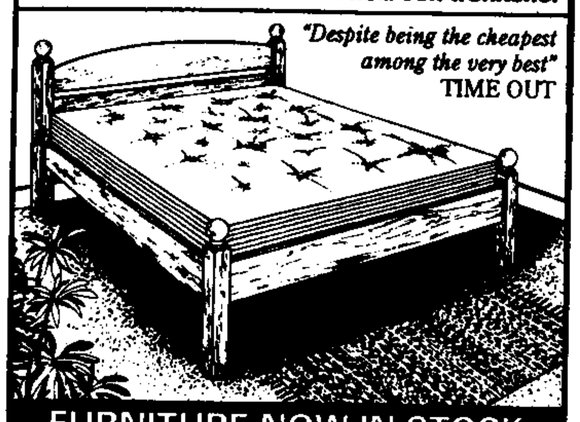

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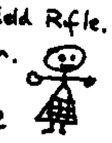

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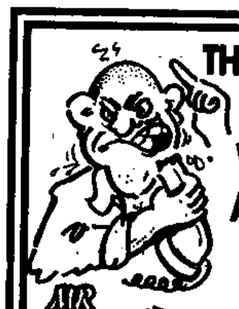

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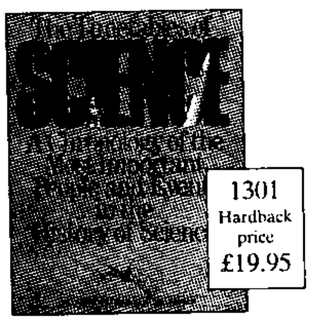
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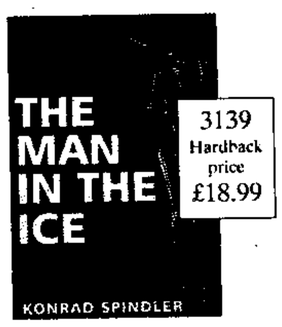

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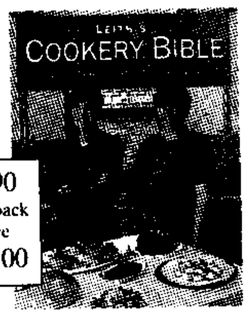

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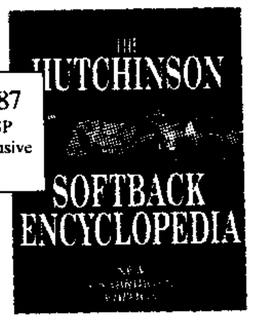

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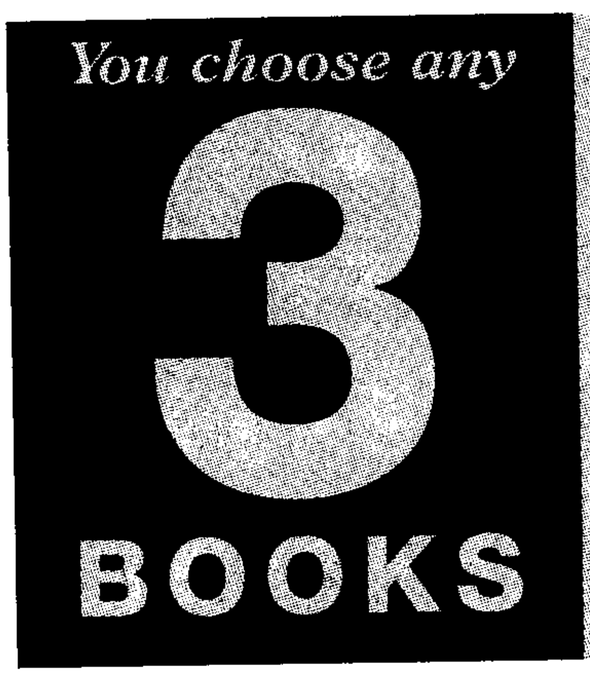

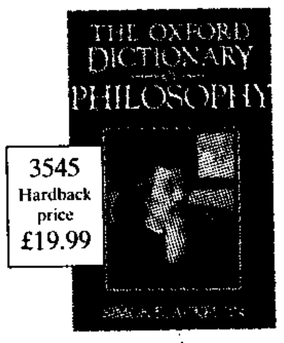

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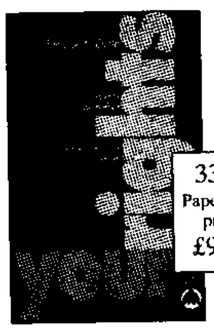
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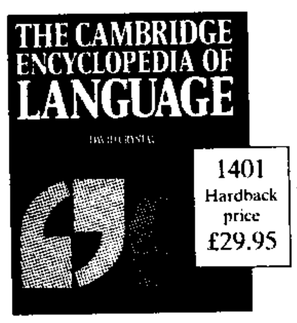

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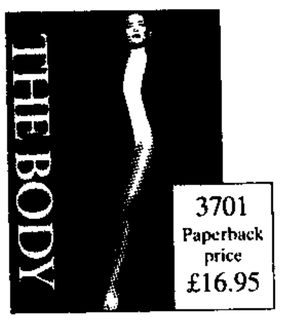

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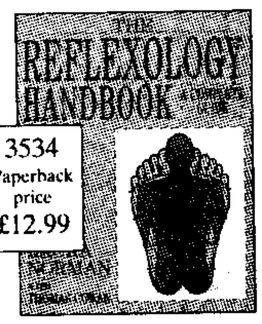

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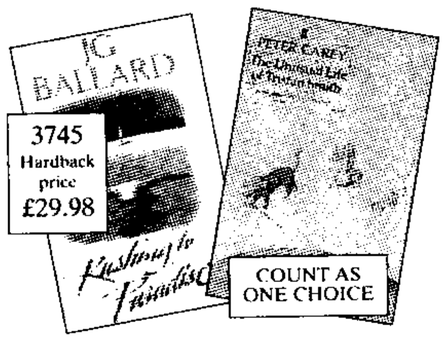

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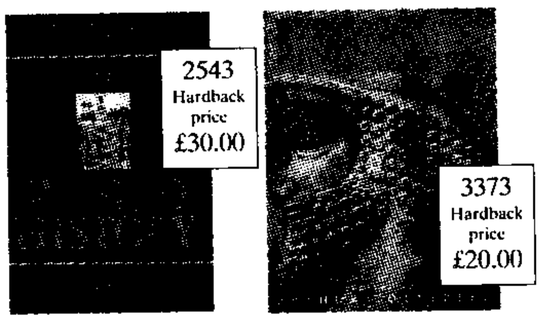
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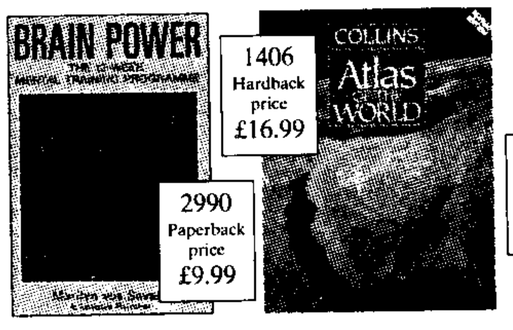

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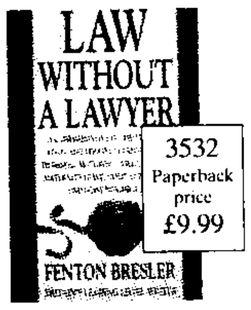

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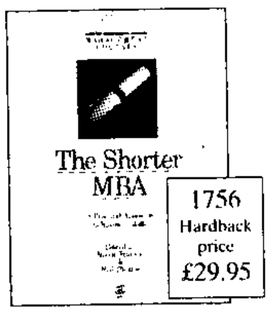

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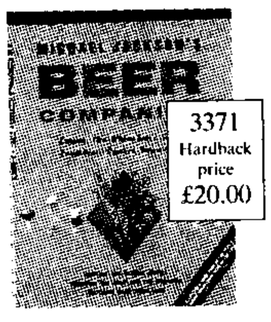

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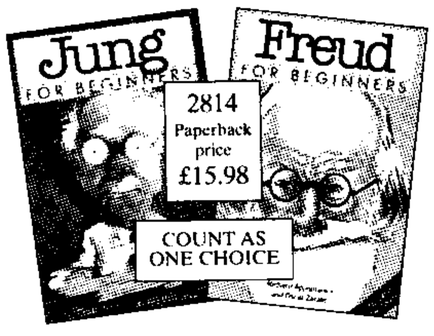

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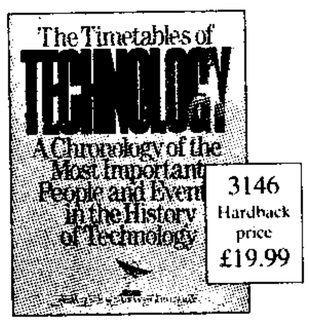

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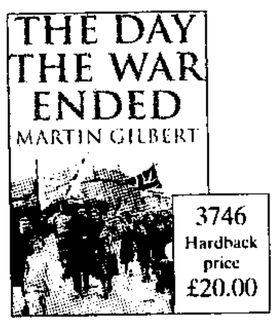

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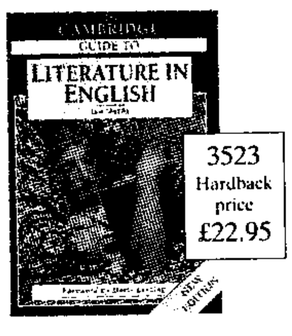

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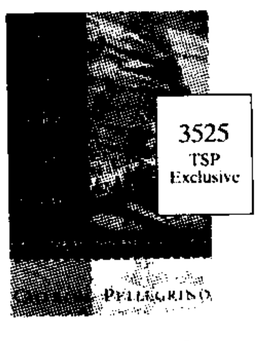

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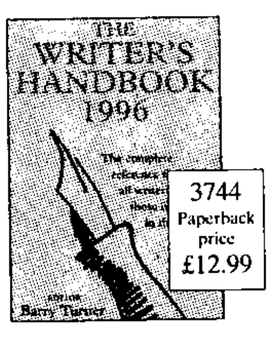

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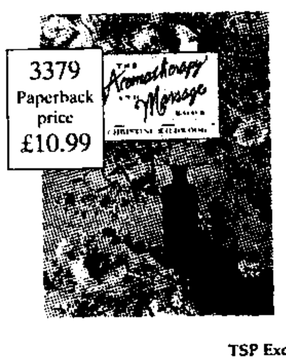

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